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**2020**

# IN - S C A P E (N.)

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The essential, distinctive, and  
revolutionary quality of a thing:  
“Here is the inscape, the epiphany,  
the moment of truth.”

-Madison Smartt Bell



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The *Inscape* family will miss Dr. Layne Neeper upon his retirement and thanks him for his guidance, vision and support of our students' creative work.

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**Mardy Wells**  
*When the Dam Breaks*  
Mixed Media  
First Place Award

# POETRY

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## **Emily Crabtree**

### *Passion*

I know I won't be revolutionary.  
I won't be in the next Renaissance  
or the next Graveyard School.  
I won't be the next contemporary.  
I won't have a worthy rehashing of  
a Biblical lesson or Shakespearian tale.  
I won't be the next Wordsworth or Coleridge.  
I won't write one of those poetry books on Walmart shelves  
with little thoughts people use as Instagram captions  
because it makes them feel good.  
I won't be in a Norton anthology fifty years from now.  
My work won't be in a syllabus.  
No one will be reading biographical snippets about me  
for their Capstone class on a Tuesday morning.

Yet there's a voice inside me saying  
"Write anyway."

## **From your students ...**

### *For Neeper*

You talked literature and punk rock with us  
and somehow made pop quizzes fun.  
You taught us how to love and discuss  
each author, one by one.  
But because we know you don't want any fuss,  
here's a thanks from all of us, for everything you've done.

## **Emily Crabtree**

### *Ex-Pending-Addict*

The universe said it was in me from birth.  
While the epidural was absorbing in her,  
“the disease” was being absorbed into me.

I was born to drown in bottles  
you can buy in gas stations  
until I’m drunk enough to drown  
in a cat’s water dish.  
Born to get food stamps  
to sell for a Ziploc bag  
with my whole day in it.  
Born to sew lies together  
the way the clothes from  
Social Services were sewn.  
Two sizes too big.  
Born to steal from blood  
in broad daylight,  
starving stomachs and starving hearts.  
Born to barter with my being.

I didn’t do any of it.  
I fought those old hags called “the Fates”  
and I beat all three of them.  
When I wake up  
and look in the mirror,  
I recognize who I see.



**Paige Stamper**  
*Post Picking up the Pieces*  
Wood Sculpture  
Second Place Award

## **Elizabeth Keeton**

### *Five Years*

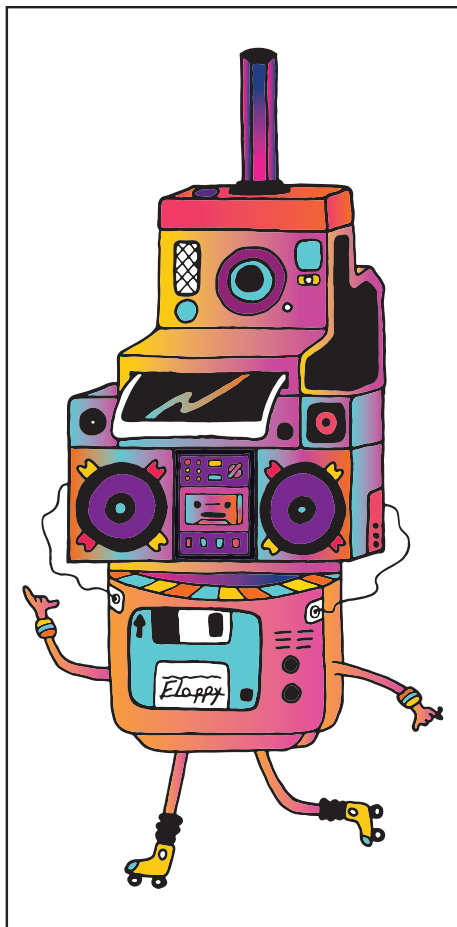
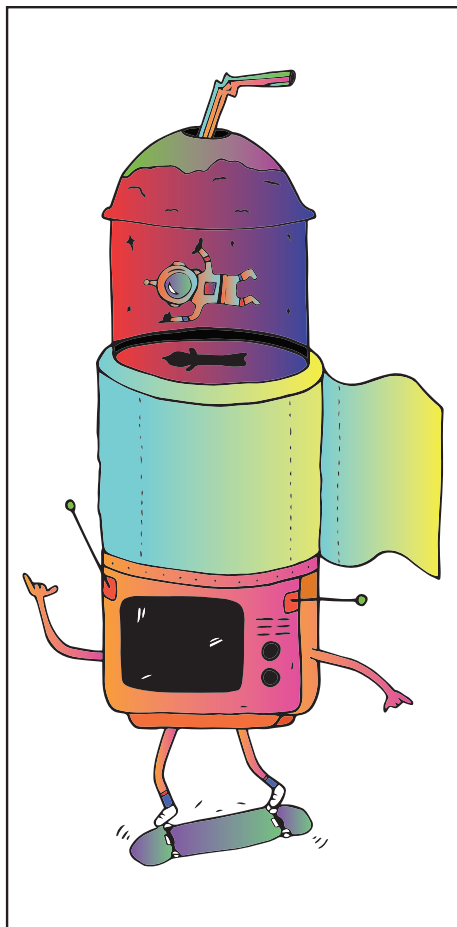
Years are made up of months  
Which are made up of weeks  
Which are made up of days  
Which can be broken down into  
Hours and minutes and seconds.

43,800 hours of  
New experiences.  
Of trembling hands  
Grazing soft skin.  
Of pickup trucks  
Parked in soccer fields  
Until the stars are  
Blinded by the sun.

2,628,000 minutes of  
Facebook pictures  
That drop my heart to the floor.  
Of frozen smiles  
And hands on waists,  
With longing eyes  
Finding the other's gaze.

157,680,000 seconds of  
Familiarity.  
Of easy conversations  
And loving backrubs.  
Of shoulders to cry on  
And open ears.

All the things you won't take back  
And all the things that I feel threatened by  
All rolled up into a neat package  
Stored in the garage and  
Labeled five years.



**Dakotah Austin Lizotte**

*Clive '65 (left)*

*80's Clive '65 (right)*

Digital Graphic

Third Place Award



**Harley Johnson**  
*Swathed in Violet*

Finding my way into town on a Tuesday night is hard.  
I have to make excuse after excuse to my father.  
“I forgot something,” I say, “I need to visit the church.” I beg.  
But there is nothing of mine in town.  
There is no church I need to visit.

My hands are folded to my stomach.  
A small batch of violets against my skirts.  
My breathing is quick, but I greet everyone I pass.  
I put up airs, I stop to talk, but I am much too preoccupied to stay.

My preacher stops me, speaks in that Sunday way.  
Asks what a young woman is doing out alone so late.  
A guilt rises to my throat, constricting.  
I cannot let him deter me, though.

I walk past the last building in town, shoes padding along the dirt roads.  
If anyone sees, they say nothing.  
I can still feel the burn of eyes on me either way.  
A sin so great as this, a terrible act of treason.

I meet her in the quietest place.  
A small field next to an old well.  
Her face shines in the light, her grey eyes appraising me.  
She sits on a stump, hands folded so neatly.

I begin to speak, but it comes out hoarse.  
She seems more beautiful every day.  
“How are you?” My voice squeaks, my hands sweat.  
She just laughs, shaking her head.

We meet together in a flurry, arms interlocked and chests  
flushed.  
Violets look lovely in her hair, tangled in among smoky brown.  
Nobody else in the world exists.

**Daniel Mutter**

*I'm Figuring it Out*

I once knew a man who checked off every box  
Crossed every "to-do" off his list  
Met every deadline  
Attended every banquet  
Danced with every beautiful woman there  
Traveled all over the world to find success

And one time as we passed around a bottle of Scotch (the good  
kind, you know)  
And a few of those really fancy cigars  
He looked me square in the eyes (and he had serious eyes)  
And said

"One day I'll figure it out."



**Benjamin Doss**  
*Why Lead Me to Nowhere?*  
Silver Gelatin Print  
Honorable Mention Award

**Daniel Mutter***Burning Love*

As the bushes outside scream to embers  
The sofa erupts into diamonds of blood  
A woman next door slams the shutters shut  
Jets tear the Heavens apart and the sky falls  
Dew on the lawn turns to ash  
The world is ending.

Aching muscles turn stone cold  
Exhaustion results in mourning  
And she is telling me no.

One day perhaps I'll understand something  
Yet the daisies in the field will still fall underfoot  
Black-eyed girl with heart so full  
Please make some room for me.

**Daniel Mutter***Images*

There was a time I believed in beauty  
Everybody knows beauty, but nobody agrees

Lapis lazuli twinkling in caverns  
Rubies bloody with scarlet desire  
A laugh you want to hear again and again  
Death receding to its cubbyhole  
Strength enough to raise an army  
Lovers screaming until lungs give out  
Macaroni crafts on a barren fridge

I desperately wish to know what beauty is  
Define it for me without words



**Amber Meckley**  
*Awe Nuts*  
Clay Sculpture  
Honorable Mention Award



**Savannah Sprinkle**  
*A Constant State of Readjustment*  
Digital Illustration  
Honorable Mention Award

## Jacob Tackett

*Tao*

### First Place Poetry Award

Cascading diamonds falling  
Into the horseshoe indent of the cliff line  
Frothing the spearmint water  
Sending circles of energy  
Through the whole bowl.  
Will-O'the-Whisps dancing  
From bank to bank  
While glowing butterflies of  
Yellow, Pink, and Orange  
Jump from succulent honeysuckle  
To lilies made of sunset.  
Ripples of light fluttering  
On the cliff face as  
Pixies flow with the trees,  
Their wind bringing the  
Damp of deep woods and  
The smell of late May flowers.  
The stain of eons revealed  
In all things, the flow of  
Time and water mark the rocks,  
The knots and bends of trees  
Display the decades of  
Elvin secrets written in the  
Velvet vermillion of their leaves;  
The soft wave of sand  
Beneath the mirror glass water  
Of the lake marking the scars  
Of months of uninterrupted movement,  
A winter's worth of rotting leaves  
And a spring's sum of budding flowers  
Perfume the air and pad the centuries  
Found in a branch falling  
Towards the ground with a thud.

## **Jacob Tackett**

### *Ballad of the Star-Lovers*

Through mud and sludge, we walk alone  
His hand I take in love,  
We gasp in awe, approach Waystone  
That place on high above.

“The hill looks hard to climb”-I say-  
“I don’t see how we can.”  
He looks at me in that kind way-  
“With Hope”-and then we ran.

Through dragon’s breath and demon home  
We fight through all our fear,  
Fought incubus and garden gnome  
With each we gave a cheer.

Then cut he was right on the thigh,  
And blood came rushing out.  
I stabbed the creature in the eye  
And saw he was blackout!

I picked him up, my shoulder bent  
Though burden he did not,  
His flaxen hair flowed as we went  
But into vines it knot.

To bark his sweet soft skin did turn  
His eyes, they lost their green.  
The sorrow in my heart did churn-  
“It is as was foreseen.”



Before he could turn into flowers  
And for all time be lost,  
I reached the top with all my powers  
And saw the stones crisscrossed.

With one last gasp I placed my hand  
Onto the cold Waystone.  
Up we shot, away from this land  
To space, and were alone.

### **Jacob Tackett**

#### *Zazen*

Dusk fills the sky with  
red warnings of what's to come:  
the pain of old age  
the bitter-sweet memories  
the fear of sickness  
the hopelessness of death.

Clinging to life a body  
sips in cool air  
feeling it flowing through its  
lungs, branching into alveolar ducts  
streaming back to the trachea  
blowing hot and steamy  
out of its mouth.  
Is this the last?

Night fills the sky with  
deep-dark-blue comforts:  
the restfulness of sleep  
the purple swirls of darkness  
the reminder of consciousness' sweet treats  
the emptiness, void of problems.



**Abby Caines**  
*Remember Me*  
Oil on Canvas  
Honorable Mention Award

Clinging to life,  
a body  
opens its eyes to a red dawn's alertness.  
And still in the morning  
the sun slowly rises.

## **Elizabeth Von Mann**

### *Storge*

Embrace the vague memories that are now bittersweet,  
those moments when you awoke to your father  
carrying you off to bed, lulled back to sleep by his body heat.

Or when you would stand in the cold on main street  
holding hands with your mother,  
watching the Christmas twinkle lights, catching thrown sweets.

Or when your older sister would call – Little Bit! – in the  
summer heat  
unaware of how simply time moves when you are younger  
too busy having fun to worry about deceit.

Or when you and your cousins danced confidently offbeat  
till you all got so dizzy you fell over –  
remember that sound of your gleeful, stomping feet.

Embrace those memories that are now bittersweet  
and do not be afraid to mourn the loss of wonder  
and the magic of being carefree.

## Elizabeth Von Mann

### *The Earthworm*

Wake up one day and observe  
the moment you find yourself in.  
Sit at your window and watch  
as the sun line creeps over the mountain  
and as a father helps his young son  
balance on the ledge of a fountain.

Here in your moment,  
cars drive by with their windows down,  
passersby slow their steps  
even past sundown  
to better take in the  
sweet spring air around.

Sit and look out your window,  
hear the birds cry—  
remember when it last rained,  
when you saw an earthworm lie  
on the crowded, wet-dark pavement;  
you stopped to look as others passed by.

Sit and look at the waxing moon,  
picture the fire and smoke  
as the Notre Dame spire collapsed  
and realize that all it manages to evoke  
in you is the same feeling  
as when you saw that earthworm on the sidewalk.

Sit and remember how you were once  
small and mortal in front of that spire,  
how even then you were underwhelmed —  
and how it was frankly more exciting on fire —  
then, stop. Stop, close your eyes and wonder  
if, perhaps, things have become rather dire.



**Emily Arledge**  
*Ghastly Bridge*  
Archival Inkjet Print

# FICTION

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**Elizabeth Keeton**

*The Attic*

The oak boards creaked under the feet that sported yellow toenails and bunions on each of his big toes. Old Seamus Adams could care less about the condition of his feet. Hell, he couldn't even bend over and scratch the moody things without his back griping the whole time.

Grumbling about the noisy children that his neighbors couldn't keep under control, he continued his hike to the attic. The only reason he even bothered to climb these damn stairs with his arthritic knees and old Hurrycane® was because the place was starting to smell like rotted meat.

Not a soul had visited that attic since his wife passed away. His daughter used to call it The Nest. She had been obsessed with flying. The thought brought a small wrinkled grin to his face before it quickly slipped away in the dim light of the stairwell. She, too, was gone now. The once beloved place now nothing more than a storeroom for unwanted junk.

Seamus tapped his cane against the oak door causing it to squeak open. The dim room came into view, only one small square window allowing light into the cramped space. In the right corner, boxes were piled almost to the ceiling creating a dome-like shape. It was where his sweet daughter had crafted her fort. Trunks littered the room—a reminder of his wife. She used them, not to pack things for vacation as most would assume, but to store things like old clothes that belonged to her mother and photo albums. There was a small path between all the trunks, which his wife used to take when she would come up here to store more of her memories.

Huffing, he stepped inside as the boards groaned under his weight. The smell was overbearing by now, nearly causing Seamus to gag. Despite the urge to barf, he shuffled over to the window—mindful of the trunks—propped his cane up against the wall, and heaved the rickety structure open. Crisp air brushed against his face. Turning around, Seamus grabbed his cane and navigated through the mess of the attic.

As he crossed the room, he spotted a trunk that his wife had been particularly proud of; she'd bought it in Europe when they had been on their honeymoon. A reminder, she had called it. When she brought it home, it had been a beautiful burgundy color, but now it was covered in dust and almost resembled a rotten pawpaw in color. Another trunk was laid on its side not five feet from this one. This one was an umber color and appeared to be sporting some mildew on its upturned side. In front of it lay a little trunk, with a wood finish that kept it from looking too out of use. As Seamus traveled toward the three, he stubbed his toe on one of the older trunks in the room. Grumbling under his breath, he continued through the attic.

Finally, he reached the other end of the room and discovered a fat rat was splayed next to the small trunk. Its matted fur was a dull grey. Unnerving beady eyes stared up at Seamus, causing his goosebumps to rise on his arms. Muttering under his breath, he snatched a dusty cloth from a nearby trunk and plucked the rodent up by its hairless tale. Seamus turned and marched back across the room and tossed the offensive animal outside. He hoped some women saw it and had a heart attack.

Forgetting to close the window, he turned back to the door that led downstairs, but the small trunk caught his eye. Cane rapping against the floor, he crept back to the trunk. Once he reached it, he brought his cane down on top of the trunk. A hard thud met his ears. The albums were definitely in there.

Seamus hooked his cane through one of the handles of the nearby trunks that had wheels attached to it and rolled it closer, its wheels squeaking from disuse. He propped himself up on it.

Bending over, his back throbbing all the while, he unlatched the small trunk and pulled the lid open. The hinges whined and the rotten smell of mold greeted him. Inside the old trunk lay a pile of photo

albums—all the covers worn and dusty. Seamus reached down and snatched the first one off the top. The velvet was squishy under his fingers. With reverence, he opened the long buried tomb.

The first picture sucked the air out of him. His wife stood smiling up at him, the usual smile that highlighted her eyes and showed off her crooked teeth. Her hair was short and permed at the time, and she was pressing a hat to her head to keep it from flying away. He'd wanted to catch her by surprise when he took the picture, but he had never managed to do that, even in twenty-five years of marriage. The next photo was of his son when he was a few days old. His face was scrunched into an angry scowl as his wife grinned down at him. He had been a serious baby, and Eleanor had enjoyed trying to make him laugh. The third photo on the page was of his daughter swinging in the playground while he stood in the background and grinned. This one, unlike the others, was in color. He brushed his fingers over the flimsy plastic that held the picture in place. Seamus clearly remembered this day.

\*\*\*\*

"Daddy, hurry up!" Eileen called. At five-years-old, his little girl was full of energy. It was hard for an old man like him to keep up. His wife marched by his side crushing the dewy grass under her feet.

"Do you think she'll ever slow down?" Eleanor asked, adjusting the camera strap around her neck.

"Not at all," Seamus answered.

Eleanor giggled, her laughter like music swept along by the wind. The two continued to stroll, hand in hand, down to the park. It consisted of two rickety old swings and one rusted slide, but their daughter loved it anyway. Her brother loved it too, before he grew too cool to play with such childish toys. Seamus believed you were never too old to act like a child.

The playground came into view. A few courageous daisies were beginning to spring up around the edges of the slide—no doubt they would be trampled in a few days. Mud lay at the bottom of the structure having never dried after the storm that had passed through a few days ago. Seamus could make out small boot prints in the mud.





**Tayler Burnette**  
*Self-portrait*  
Oil Painting

The ground under the swings was rutted away by children digging their feet in the moist earth to stop the swings.

“Daddy, come swing with me!” Eileen shouted.

“You’re being summoned,” Eleanor teased.

Grinning, Seamus jogged over to Eileen, dirt crunching under his feet. As she heaved herself onto the swing and righted herself, Seamus grabbed the chilly metal chain links and pulled back on them. When he had raised her above his head, he let the metal go and gave his Eileen a light push. Squealing, she went flying on the swing, her blonde hair sparkling in the sun.

A loud click was audible from across the park. Seamus caught sight of his wife, camera in hand as she snapped a few more shots.

\*\*\*\*

Those were simpler days, Seamus thought wistfully as he stroked the picture of Eileen. The days when his children actually gave a damn about him.

A loud imposing ring filled the air.

The sharp noise caused the old man to jump and take in the dank attic. That must be Doris. With a sigh, he dumped the album back in the trunk, planted his cane on the wooden planks with a bang, and managed to get himself standing again. Not bothering to close the trunk, he dragged himself back down the stairs until he reached the front door. Seamus yanked the door open.

“Hey there, hon,” Doris greeted him, her bubbly personality never wavering despite his glare.

“Did you bring my food?” Seamus asked nastily.

“Sure did,” she said as she made her way into the kitchen. Regrettably, he had his license revoked a few years ago because of his poor eyesight. He’d been forced to hire Doris since the grocery store was too far of a walk.

“You need anything else, sugar?” she asked as she started to put away his food. Doris had taken the liberty of reorganizing his cabinets.

“No,” he ground out, impatiently tapping his cane on the tiles.

“Well, if you need anything, you know my number.”



**Nancy Lewis**  
*Not Forgotten*  
Silver Gelatin Print

\*\*\*\*

It was a week before Seamus bolstered his courage and returned to the attic. Thunder rumbled as he tried to tackle the stairs. When he finally opened the attic door, a blast of wind nearly tumbled him back down the steps. Forcefully, he pushed his way into the room and firmly slammed the door behind him. Boards crying out as his cane slapped against them, Seamus crossed the tiny attic and arrived at the window. Leaning his cane up against the wall, he pressed his calloused fingers into the splintered wood of the window frame until it gave way with an angry creak. Angrily, Seamus snatched his cane and waddled back over to the open trunk, hoping that the rain and wind hadn't damaged the photos.

As he seated himself on the trunk, he realized that the albums were fine and remained exactly where he left them. He grabbed a different album than the one he had glanced at before. As he tugged the plastic book out from under the others, a piece of paper slipped out of the album and landed on top of one of the other albums. Seamus snatched it up. Immediately, he regretted his decision to come up here.

In his hand was his wife's memorial card. She was smiling, but her smile was thin and made her face look small. It was the smile of someone in pain. Perhaps, he could have picked a better picture, but he wanted everyone to understand how much she had suffered.

The cancer was a demon. It had consumed her before the doctors even knew it existed. By the time they detected it, it was too late to save Eleanor; all they could do was ease her pain.

Seamus felt the ache in his chest grow every day that she suffered. When she was finally gone, he felt he had lost all control of his life. His habit of an occasional drink down at the local bar had turned into an issue rather quickly.

His mind went back to an early morning when he'd come home late.

\*\*\*\*

There was a table in the middle of the floor. Seamus knew this because his hip had just smashed into it and pain was searing down his right side. The hallway light flicked on, illuminating the kitchen

doorway. Oops. He hadn't meant to be that loud. Deafening thuds could be heard coming from the hallway. Malachi appeared in the doorway. The boy didn't resemble his mother in the slightest. Bitterness seized Seamus' heart.

"What are you doing up, boy?" he slurred, leaning heavily on the kitchen table.

"Shut up," Malachi hissed. "You'll wake Eileen up."

Seamus laughed cruelly. "You already did that with your stomping up the hall."

"How drunk are you?" the boy whispered.

"Not enough."

Anger burned on Malachi's face. His son's fists tightened, and the muscles in his arms tensed. Seamus recognized those signs. When he was young, he had done the same thing if he was angered.

"Who do you think you are, old man?" Malachi demanded. "Coming home at four in the morning drunk off your ass. Eileen has a test today, not that you knew that since you don't bother being a father to her anymore." The thought of his nine-year-old brought shame to his heart. "Is this what you think Mom would have wanted?"

Anger burned through his veins at the mention of Eleanor. Seamus launched across the room and slammed his fist into Malachi's jaw. His fingers crunched against bone, and the skin of his knuckles split open, blood spraying from his son's face like a hose. He nearly stumbled back.

He'd hit a fifteen-year-old who had just lost his mother. "Malachi, are you—"

"Don't," he hissed, disgust flaming in his copper eyes. "Just don't wake Eileen up."

\*\*\*\*

Seamus thought back to that morning, and he still couldn't comprehend it. Normally, he never would have laid a hand on his children, but rage had taken over. Looking back, he was always surprised that he didn't stop drinking after that. Instead, he'd found himself drawn to bars like an adventurer to treasure. Only on rare occasions did he return home before dawn after a night out. Seamus

pushed away anyone who tried to help him, especially his children. It wasn't until years later that he quit drinking, but by then, it was too late.

The doorbell yanked him back to the present day. Tossing the albums back into the trunk and slapping the lid shut, Seamus rose from his seat. Gently, he placed Eleanor's memorial card onto her old grey trunk that he used as a seat.

Annoyed with his caretaker, he descended the stairs and jerked the door open. There stood Doris in bright purple scrubs.

"Hey, sugar," she said slipping past him.

Grumbling, Seamus followed her to the kitchen. Again, he tapped his cane against the tiles while he waited for her to leave. She rambled on about her family like Seamus actually cared as she banged the cabinets shut.

"I need to call my old man," Doris muttered under her breath as she threw the last bag away. The sentence caught Seamus' attention. "He's going through a hard time right now, with Mom gone and all." A pause. "Well, I've got to head out. Call me if you need anything."

The thought of Doris' father sent Seamus' hands to quivering. Had Doris' mother died of cancer like Eleanor had? Had her father gone through the torture of having to watch someone he loved slowly cease to exist? Perhaps, but what struck Seamus was Doris reaching out to her dad. He wondered if the old man would push her away or cry on her shoulder.

He stumbled over to the wall phone and shakily lifted the phone off the receiver. The plastic was cool and smooth against his hand, encouraging him to press the keys despite his nervousness. His heart nearly gave out as he listened to the dreadful beep. Sweat pooled on his hand. After five long rings, he got an answer.

An automated voice picked up telling him that this number had been disconnected. Slamming the phone down, Seamus collapsed onto a stool. How foolish he was to think Malachi had the same number he had twenty years ago. Tears pressed against the back of his eyelids, begging for release. Angrily, he wiped them away.

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Seamus didn't return to the attic for a month. He spent his time in front of the TV, watching reruns of old westerns, instead of reliving his memories through those photos. On days when he couldn't get the attic out of his mind, he would flip to the news and listen to the newscaster drone on about what a depressing state the world was in. Sometimes, his hands shook with the thought of his family, but he repressed them and forced his hands to still. However, the fear wasn't enough to keep him away from those precious photos.

He found himself back in the attic on a Wednesday in April. Bravely, he crept across the crowded room, ignoring the smell of the murky air. Finally, he found himself in front of the trunk again. Gently, he removed Eleanor's memorial card, held it in his hand, and opened the trunk.

Dank air greeted him. He nearly choked on all the dust that he stirred up. Setting the card down and grabbing a random album, he flipped to the middle of the book. Eileen stared up at him, her face solemn for once. It had been taken when Eleanor had asked her to show them her serious face. Seamus almost laughed out loud before Eleanor could snap the picture.

Where was his sweet little girl now? Seamus leaned his head back against the wall and let himself imagine her. She was probably just like her mother.

Flipping the page, he saw another photo of Eileen; this one featured Malachi. The sun was so bright that the kids were squinting as they smiled. With the sunlight pooling around their hair, they both looked like angels.

The picture made him long for their smiles again, rather than the hate that they had both thrown him during their last days together. Malachi had taken Eileen from him when the drinking had been too much for her. She was sixteen the last time he saw her.

Perhaps he could have been more considerate to them in his grief. After all, they had lost a mother while he had lost a wife. Was there a way to measure whose loss had been greater? What an old fool he was considering these things now.

Second chances were jokes for people like him.

A sharp ring pierced the air.

Perfect timing as always, Seamus thought. Feebly, he rose from the trunk and made the long march down the stairs to allow Doris in.





**Brandon Banta**  
*Disassociate*  
Digital Photograph



## Aleksander Kendrick

### *The Death of Eliza*

Amongst the talk in London, in hushed whispers spoken in careful glances over shoulders, one thing was certain – Lucius, Lord of Waverly Manor, killed his wife.

I was first told at Lord Goddard's ball upon mingling with the other ladies. Many watched the men filter into the ballroom, some with envious eyes. My friend had been eyeing Lucius the same, and I had mistakenly assumed that she was infatuated with him. "By all means, Miss Burress, if you find yourself staring at Lord Waverly too much to enjoy our company, simply ask him your hand already."

The face of Rosa Burress flushed with what I had assumed was embarrassment, looking at me as though I were mad. "Why, Miss Lorena Martin, if I had not heard you correctly, I would have thought you mad enough to suggest I dance with someone like Lucius Waverly!"

"There's no need for denial," I said, glimpsing at Lord Waverly, who stood alone. "We have known each other all too long, Rosa. You need not worry about conflict with me. I could even fetch him, if you wish."

Rosa's brow creased before she calmed herself, and for a moment, I thought I had angered her. "You must be unaware of Lord Waverly's reputation. Had you known an ounce of what the rest of us do, you would be quite hesitant to even speak his name."

I grew curious, then, resting my near-empty cup of tea on the table before leaning close to her. "And what do you know that seems to be so grave? Is he seeing a married woman? Perhaps he—"

"He killed his wife."

I hesitated then, looking between Rosa and Lucius in disbelief. Certainly, he and I had never spoken, and he seemed to be perpetually surrounded by an air of mystery. He hardly spoke, but when he did, his voice was always low, as if speaking above a murmur would unveil his terrible secret. It soon came time to choose partners for the dance, and against Rosa's agitated warnings, I moved for the archway he was standing under.

Lucius did not notice me at first. He held a glass of wine in his gloved hands, staring out at the ball room as if lost in thought. When I cleared my throat to gather his attention, he seemed to flinch. "Lord Waverly," I said, smiling politely with a slight bow. "It is a pleasure to meet you - my name is Lorena Martin. Pardon my straightforwardness, but it appears that you do not have a partner for the first dance of the party. I, myself, am also in want of a partner, and I find that you look as though you would be a marvelous one."

Lucius glanced over me once, then, with a long sip of his wine, muttered, "I do not dance, Miss Martin, nor would I want to."

I felt heat rising in my cheeks from the embarrassment of rejection, though I had no intentions of actually partnering with him. Stepping just close enough for our conversation to be private, I looked up at him innocently, saying, "I'm sure your wife would disagree with that statement, Lord Waverly."

The look Lucius gave me was enough for me to freeze in place, holding my breath as if I expected to become his next victim right there. His green eyes seemed to cast daggers into me, and I found that I had no remark for the utter expression of anger on his face. "Miss Martin," he began, his words harsher and sharper than before. "I have only arrived in London nearly half a year ago, and if you were competent enough to hold a conversation, you would find that I have never married, and have no desire to do so with ladies such as yourself. I do not know where you could have possibly received the notion that I am married, though I suspect it was spoken by none smarter than you."

A gasp left my lungs, and I fought the urge to throw his wine onto him in a fit of anger. Speaking perhaps before I had truly thought over my words, I raised my brow and said, "Is that why there's talk of murder in your veins? Perhaps you are married no longer, but it is generally agreed upon that there was once a Lady Waverly. By the shortness of your temper and the arrogance of your words, I find that such a heinous act may not be so unimaginable in your mind."

Lucius stepped closer until he was nearly towering over me. I could smell the wine on his breath, though I was certain that he wasn't drunk. "And tell me, Lorena, just who was this Lady Waverly, if you are so certain she existed?"



**Elizabeth Antoniou**  
*In a Dimension of Imagination*  
Silver Gelatin Print

I found that I had no answer, though I could feel the eyes of curious watchers on me, or perhaps it was simply the nature of Lucius's uncanny presence. Lifting my skirt so that I could make a hasty escape, I stepped away, bowing. "Good night, Lord Waverly."

As I made my way to leave the ball entirely, I had nearly made it to the front door when Rosa grabbed my forearm roughly, leading me outside with a cautious look over her shoulder. When the door shut and we were within the safety of the night, she released me, looking at me with a similar expression to Lucius's. "Are you trying to get yourself killed? What could you have possibly gained from asking Lord Waverly of his wife? Oh, you stupid, stupid girl!"

I looked down at my shoes to avoid her harsh gaze in fear that I might burst into tears. Steadying my breath, I said, "Lord Waverly said he has never married."

"Did you expect a murderer to be honest with you?"

I looked up at her, peering through the well-lit windows of the ball, observing the guests and finding that Lucius was nowhere to be found. "Why has no one convicted him, if everyone is so certain he murdered Lady Waverly?"

Rosa sighed, clenching her hands nervously as she called for a carriage to take us back to our respective houses. "You cannot convict a man - especially a Lord - without evidence. Certainly, some have tried. They searched for the body of Lady Waverly in the forest near his manor, but to no avail. It is as though Lady Waverly has simply vanished."

Rosa seemed so certain that Lucius had killed his wife that I found myself doubting even his own word. We climbed in, and I felt freer to speak of the dreaded rumor within the safety of the carriage. "How are you so certain that she ever existed?"

"You've only just recently integrated into the higher society, so I am not surprised that you had never met her. Lady Waverly - Eliza, as she was commonly called - attended every ball, though she was always a timid thing. She was excessively kind, though she typically kept to herself just as Lord Waverly does. It was always suspected that the lord of the house was away, for she never spoke of him until just before her

presumed death. If you ask me, I believe they had a rather unhappy marriage, and that is why Lord Waverly did it.”

I did not speak in fear that I would uncover more truths than I was prepared for. The carriage arrived at my house all too soon, and upon bidding Rosa goodbye, I fell into a restless, uneasy sleep.

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The next day seemed to drift by slowly, filling the house with a sleepy air that lingered even as I readied myself for the evening’s charity ball. Rosa chided me as she entered the spare bedroom that had become my own, fetching her best makeup to try to cover the dark circles that had formed under my eyes.

“Really, Lorena, I would have hoped you to be more responsible than this,” she muttered, holding me still as she covered my face with powder, nearly staining my dress white. “It’s not as though the charity ball is this big surprise – I had your invitation sent to your room weeks ago!”

“I couldn’t sleep,” I admitted, an embarrassed flush forming across my cheeks. “I kept thinking of Lord Waverly.”

“I suppose he is rather handsome for a murderer, isn’t he?” Rosa retorted. “What coffin should I order for the wedding?”

My expression fell into a glare as Rosa turned to gather more supplies. “I was not thinking of him in that sense! I simply kept thinking of his wife, is all. It’s a curious thing, isn’t it?”

A shudder ran down Rosa’s spine before she turned away. “I try not to think of it,” she said softly.

“I think it to be a rather terrible thing that no one has tried questioning him. If Lady Eliza had been so loved, then why is Lord Waverly walking free?” Perhaps I had spoken out of line, because Rosa only shot me a troubled look.

“It’s not that we exactly prefer him to be free,” Rosa said. “But I’ve heard a terrible rumor that Lord Waverly becomes quite frightful if he hears her name spoken. I suppose it’s a precaution, then, to avoid becoming his next victim until we find true evidence of the crime.”

I remained silent as Rosa worked, thinking of only how unfair it could possibly be, for Lucius to be free to live his life while Eliza

presumably rotted somewhere. Perhaps Rosa was wrong to tell me so much of the Waverly mystery, for I decided then that I would get to the bottom of it.

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The charity ball was nowhere near as exciting as Lord Goddard's ball had been, though Rosa urged me to try to at least look mildly interested in what the host had to say. However, as the event droned on, I found my mind wandering again to thoughts of Eliza – and of Lucius.

Rosa knew right away what I was thinking of when my eyes drifted to the parlor, where Lucius stood chatting quietly with another man. Waving her glass of wine in front of me to gather my attention, she met my gaze with a firm, serious look. "You will not speak to him, Lorena. Have I your word?"

I paused.

Lucius stood alone as the other man shook his hand before exiting the ball. He lingered, twirling a glass with his yet-again gloved fingers.

"Lorena Martin," Rosa said firmly. "Your word?"

I could almost imagine the ghost of Eliza among the crowd, peering at Lucius with empty, haunted eyes. No one mourned her, because no one knew where her body rested. Would her hand still wear his ring, or had Lucius removed it?

I stood up, ignoring Rosa's words, knowing without a doubt that if I were Eliza, I wouldn't want to spend eternity forgotten – or worse, in a shallow grave in the backyard of Waverly Manor.

I knew Lucius had spotted me when his normally neutral face dropped to a scowl, though the change was too subtle for others to notice. I approached him with none of the caution I had carried the night before, peering up at him with a confident air that he seemed to take note of.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of this meeting, Miss Martin?" He asked, his voice practically dripping with ice.

"You told me before that if I were so certain of the late Lady Waverly's existence, that I would know her name," I remarked. Lucius seemed to pale, his skin shimmering with a clammy sweat as he stared





**Cody Ryan Daugherty**  
*Self-Portrait*  
Mixed Media Painting

at me with curious, wide eyes. “And now I approach you with her name. Tell me, Lucius, have you forgiven yourself for the murder of Eliza-”

He moved closer so suddenly that I thought he would attack, though I fought the urge to scream. Cold eyes peered down at me, though he couldn’t hide the unmistakable pain in his expression.

I had been right, after all.

“I’ll not make a scene and give you the honor, Lorena,” he said quietly, his voice seemingly creaking with what seemed like either grief or pain. “I’ll not let you convict me of a crime you so desperately want me to commit, though if you want to make a villain of me, I’ll allow that much. Eliza is forgotten, and it would be in your best interest to forget her, as well.”

“Are you threatening me, Lord Waverly?”

“A mere promise, perhaps, but not a threat.” He stepped back, a sly grin on his face despite the way he clutched at his chest. Something grave changed within him, and then he was rushing for the door. “I fear my – heart condition, is occurring yet again. I advise our next meeting to be different – if we meet at all, Miss Martin.”

Had I not been frozen to my spot in fear, perhaps I would have chased after him when he ran outside. I didn’t even notice I was being watched until Rosa grabbed me, though she didn’t drag me outside but rather, shook me to attention.

“Do you not realize what you’ve done?” She asked, her voice a whisper as she watched the crowds surrounding us.

“Eliza did exist,” I said stupidly, my mind still clouded in shock.

“And you’re to meet her, if he sees you again.”

---

I had a rather nasty habit of defying Rosa, it seemed, since I left the charity ball far earlier than her – against her advice. Rosa begged me to stay, angry that she was unable to leave and worried that I would run into a rather-dangerous Lucius Waverly on my journey home. The carriage wasn’t coming until after the party ended, and thus I prepared to make the long walk alone.



Clutching a hatpin in fear that I would run into Lucius, I nearly overlooked the manor looming over the others, just outside of town – far too close to my own house. Rosa had told me before that Lucius’s manor was always closed off from the public, his gates never open to visitors. Yet, when I walked by his own house, I noticed that he had left the gates wide open, a gaping mouth seemingly waiting for the next Eliza.

I soon discovered what had stopped me in my tracks when I looked back up at the extravagant manor, spotting the silhouette of a woman on the top floor. I knew instantly that I was not staring at Lucius, that this figure was far too womanly, and yet I knew that Lucius had never remarried.

I realized then that Eliza was being held captive in the manor.

To hell with Rosa’s caution, for I started up the long driveway with ease, breaking into a jog when I realized that the lights were still on – meaning that Lucius was likely awake despite his apparent heart condition.

I didn’t knock when I approached the large front doors – I simply threw them open, hoping Eliza would forgive me for my rude behavior. I spotted the immaculate stairs after a moment’s hesitation, taking them in leaps. I nearly hesitated when no servants came to stop me – I hadn’t even seen Lucius within the manor, yet I had not been exactly quiet about entering.

The top floor was simple, with only one doorway at the end of a long hallway – the master bedroom, I presumed, and precisely where I had seen Eliza. I didn’t knock. I simply threw open the doors, ready to rescue Eliza before anyone noticed.

A surprised gasp filled the room, and my face reddened when I realized that I was staring at the nearly naked back of Eliza, though I noticed curiously that she was wearing trousers. I didn’t notice the ribbons wrapped around her chest until she turned around, and then I had to grip the doorway in my shock.

“Who is-” The voice died upon their lips when they turned, clutching their chest with a pale arm. Short black hair and permanently cold eyes stared back at me, and then Lucius – no, Eliza – was flinching, reaching for a pistol that had been lying on a dresser.

I was not mistaken. It was Eliza's chest. Her arms. And yet, Lucius stared at me, his hand shaking as he turned to the side to cover himself, pointing the pistol at me. "You're Eliza," I said, my voice barely a whisper in my shock.

Lucius made a sharp, angry sound, and I realized then that tears were forming in his eyes. "I stopped being Eliza long ago. Why have you come here?"

"I thought – I thought –"

"Whatever you thought, you were wrong!" He retorted. "Eliza is dead, yes, but I did not kill her! But perhaps her memory could die with you."

Staring at the barrel of his gun, I only said, "Do you not realize that they would know? Rosa would realize I never came home, and then they would come for you. They've been looking for a reason to convict you of Eliza's murder."

"You must understand it was easier to say that Eliza was dead – or never existed – than to try to explain this," he said, looking away as he reddened. "I was never meant to be her."

"Then perhaps you need a friend who only knows Lucius." I moved closer, slowly, and then Lucius was lowering the gun.

"You don't - You don't think me a freak?" He asked, sniffing so pathetically that I could no longer imagine the once-terrifying Lucius.

"No," I said. "I don't. Eliza will die with me, but I will live. Your secret stays with me."

Lucius laughed for perhaps the first time, dropping the gun on the floor, and I found myself laughing with him – Lucius, the man, and not Eliza.



**Liz Ketz**  
*Girl With the Golden Eyes*  
Acrylic Paint and Gold Leaf

## Harley Johnson

### *Rainy*

Their home is silent after hours of chatter. It is littered with stray cups and empty bottles, the stench of body odor and lingering alcohol permeating. The windows show the dark night, stars dotting the sky and the bright moon full in its beauty, their backyard tinted blue under the dark night that has taken over. The inside of the home is much different, dim lights casting orange hues over white walls and lighting up vacant corners. The home is still vibrating with the energy of the cluttered noise that had been there just a bit before, and it will reverberate until the end of the night. They are sitting in their kitchen, table covered in partially eaten snacks and dirty plates. They sit on opposing sides, looking down at their hands or peeking around the room. They don't dare meet the other's eye.

Nearest to the fridge and farthest from the back door is Joseph Taller. He's a man who just got promoted and threw a party to celebrate, inviting the office to his small home on a beautiful Friday night. He's dressed business casual, nice white button-up and khakis. He looks the part of an up-and-comer, someone who is content in his life and revels in the repetitive work from the office. He wandered around the party and chatted with his peers, smiling at the unfunny jokes his boss would make and slinging an arm around him when he got too drunk. He has laugh lines despite only being twenty-five. Joe sits slouched in his chair, looking down at his twiddling thumbs, pouting like he doesn't want to be the one to start the conversation.

Nearest to the back door and farthest from the fridge is Mary-Anne Taller. She's Joe's wife, round in the face and mousy. She works freelance and takes jobs whenever she can, but her creative spirit shines through in everything she does. Her red dress was modified for the night by hand, little strips of darker crimson rolling across the bosom and down to the floor. She was the unwitting hostess to a party she didn't want to have, serving smiles on a silver platter and handing out platitudes to the many people who came and left. She has purple bags under her eyes that her make-up couldn't cover. She has dimples when she smiles, but nobody has seen them in a long time. Anne sits straight in her chair, staring off somewhere above Joe's head.

“Boy,” Joe says, voice masquerading as chipper. “They really left a mess, huh?” Joe smiles over at his wife. She looks down at him from wherever she had been looking, dark eyes trained on him but not really seeing him.

“They did.” Anne takes a breath, chest rising like it pains her and falling like it hurts. “I guess we should clean up, shouldn’t we.” She doesn’t say it like a question, and she doesn’t wait for an answer. She stands on stiff legs and begins her task, picking up disgusting paper plates and carting them to the trash. Joe only jumps into action when Anne gives him a pointed look, though he isn’t stiff. He moves like he’s glad for the distraction, humming as he empties the snacks into containers. The salsa spills a bit, sloshing on the floor, but he ignores it.

They dance around each other, moving in sync as they shuffle from one side of the room to the other. As Joe shoves the leftovers into the fridge, Anne sweeps the chips out the back door to deal with later. As Anne puts a half-drunk bottle into the fridge, Joe takes the trash out the back door. When they get close they look away, when they share space it becomes electric with the unsaid. Their home is a minefield and their feet are gracefully stepping around them, but how long until one of them missteps?

The home is cleaned slowly. Anne scrubs the couch while Joe sweeps the bathroom, Joe mops the kitchen while Anne vacuums. They glance at each other, every once in a while, by accident. Joe always looks apologetic, like he’s done something so terrible that he can’t begin to make up for it. Anne looks at him like she can see through him, unwavering and unemotional. They always look away right after, eyes jolting apart like they’ve been burned by the contact.

Once the home is clean, they stagnate. There’s still a bit of salsa on the floor and a paper plate is still under the coffee table, but it is clean enough. Joe stands in the kitchen while Anne sits in the living room on the couch. Her beautiful dress shines under the artificial living room light, pooling nicely around her feet and defining her shape. She’s beautiful, dark hair falling in well-kept curls that didn’t fall out even as they cleaned. Anne doesn’t try to turn on the television, as even the pleasant background noise couldn’t give her reprieve. Joe keeps looking to her, hesitating, and looking away again.

"I'm going to go change." Anne pushes herself off of the couch, sighing. She begins to move toward the stairs and to their bedroom, but Joe moves in her periphery and she hesitates. Her stance is that of prey waiting to be slaughtered, hunched shoulders and unfocused eyes. When she turns to him, he finds his voice.

"You looked really nice tonight." Joe smiles, his white teeth catching light. He looks desperate for relief, his posture slack and eyes pleading. He's a kicked puppy, tired and huggable. His baby blues are wet with something, but he doesn't let himself cry.

"Thank you." Anne says, frown unmoved. She looks away from him like he said nothing at all, wandering up the stairs without a second glance. He listens to her as she walks, but he knows that she isn't going to their bedroom.

Joe is a smart man. He had honors in high school, lived in an affluent household. He wasn't above the middle class, but he was sitting pretty toward the top of it. He lived in a small town where the upper middle class appeared like billionaires, where with a decent salary you could coast above most people in the community. He did, living high in high school and living at the top of his game. He's a nice guy, too, someone that is dependable and good natured. He drops hundreds on every charity that he sees even if they need the money. He married the first beautiful girl that would give him a chance and moved to the suburbs, going off with a big party thrown by the entire town to celebrate him and his promising life.

Anne, he knows, is not like him. She grew up somewhere else, far up in the cold tundra of Washington state. The rain seeped into her skin and hasn't ever left, but she has a bright side. Little holes in her clouds that come in the form of a kind, withered smile. Someone took that smile away when she was small and unhurt. He tries so hard to bring it back, but it never stays and somehow he knows he won't ever be the one to bring it back. She grew up poor in a community of worn out people. They lived paycheck to paycheck, they worked on days when others would be with family. She would sit at home and have her own Christmas, she would play with dolls and hide away in fantasy. He listens to her fall to the floor somewhere in the house. He knows where that somewhere is.





**Caitlyn Biggs**  
*Artist Life*  
Oil Painting

This purgatory lingers in the home as they find their places. They hold out for as long as they can, stars swirling outside and slowly giving way to dawn. Joe reaches for the stairs, but he wonders if he should dare. Is he really the one who should do this, he wonders. She's tried to depend on him so many times, but it always falls through. Somehow his sturdiness isn't the kind she needs, and every time he offers himself he falls under the pressure. She weighs a ton and he is not strong, but he's the only one here to try.

The stairs carry him up, squeaking their well-wishes as he ascends. He is at their peak, looking down the hall like it is his greatest challenge. Maybe it will be until a new one comes along, maybe he will be put to trial here and nothing else will ever compare. He walks with small steps, breathing quietly. He doesn't go down to the end and to their bedroom, he stops and looks at a door closed firmly. There are no sounds inside, but there is a presence that Joe can feel. He reaches for the cold knob, hand quivering.

"Anne?" He whispers when the door is open. He looks in like he fears a bomb, but all he gets is a figure kneeling on the hardwood.

The room is blue. Carefully painted clouds line the walls, little white puffs that fly through an imaginary sky. There is a small chest of toys off to the side, brought by family and friends. A crib sits in front of the far window, a perfect place for someone to look out and see the changing sky. A little blue carpet, a high-chair, a changing station. A bright blue rug sitting in the middle of the floor, soft and perfect for little hands and feet, with a bright red woman kneeling.

"Anne?" Joe says again, because it is all he can say.

"Joe." Anne's voice is smooth, comforting. It is the voice of someone who could have become famous, whose song could ring out to crowds and sooth them too. "I didn't want to have a party." Anne says simply, unmoving. Her voice is the kind that brings someone to a halt, emotions piled up so high that nobody could ever climb them.

"I thought it might cheer you up, to have . . . company." Joe steps fully into the room. Anne isn't turning to him, she isn't moving, hardly breathing.

"I know. You told me that already." Anne takes a heavy breath, back rising and falling. Her hands clench into the plush carpet, her



eyes screwed closed. She bows her head, black hair cascading around her. It's blue-black in the light of the moon, a deep midnight that makes him reminisce about the times they've spent happily.

"Anne, I know it still hurts, okay?" Joe comes closer, hand out and ready to comfort his wife. "I really think you just need to get out there. Being in here, being around this . . ." Joe looks around the room, a pang of gut-wrenching despair filling him. He can't finish his thought, closing his mouth tight and blinking fast.

"Joe, I don't see how going outside can help me. I don't think anything can help me." Anne's voice rises. She leans forward on her fists, clenching her teeth together so hard that it sends jolts of electric pain through her entire body.

"Anne--" Joe begins, but he doesn't get to finish.

"I didn't realize before how much I hate looking at you." Anne says, and it sounds like a finality. Joe's eyes turn to plates as he scrambles to get it together, his hands clenching in air. He pauses above her, looking down. "Being around you every day is making me sick. It's making me so sick that I can barely move. Every time I hear you it makes my stomach turn and I want to run away. I want to run away and go as far as I possibly can." Anne's voice comes out as a growl, tears falling out of her clenched eyes.

"Anne, come on, don't say that, okay?" Joe puts a hand on her back. She feels cold. "I'll sleep on the couch. We can talk about this tomorrow." Joe reaches down to pull her up, but Anne turns on herself and slaps his hand away.

"Don't touch me! Don't fucking touch me!" Anne screams, eyeshadow running down her face in big, black lines. Her face contorts in uncontrolled rage, her body defensive from its place on the floor. "Leave me the hell alone! Get the fuck away from me!" She howls, voice echoing through the house. It is deafening, it is brutal, and Joe backs away like she is about to pounce. "I want a fucking divorce! I want out of here!" Anne pounds a fist on the floor, letting out a final yowl and she crumbles. Her back trembles and her breath quivers, she sounds like she's dying but Joe doesn't know what to do.

"Anne . . ." Joe mumbles, voice wavering as he looks at her. She curls in on herself, hands curling into her hair and pulling as hard as

she can. Her knees meet her forehead and she shakes. She lets out a scream, she begins to sob, and she screams while she sobs. Joe stands in the doorway, hands hovering, eyes wide.

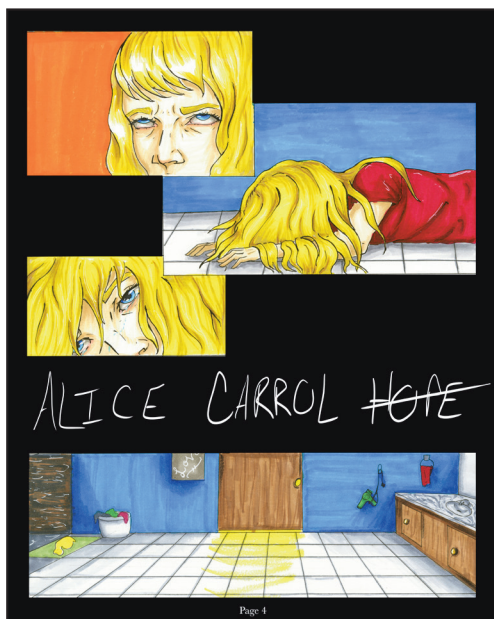
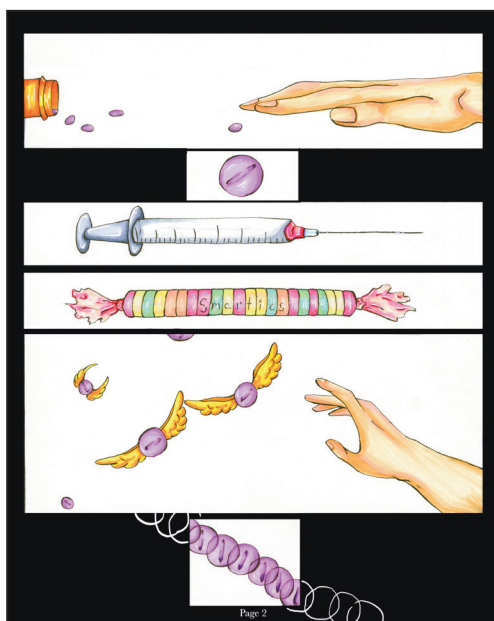
Dawn peeks through the window behind her, pinks and purples rising to meet the new day. Anne is quiet, but tears still roll down her cheeks. Joe sits with his back against the door, watching his wife cry again. He doesn't know how to help, he never has. She was infected with something, something she never would say and he's not someone who knows how to help with infections. Even on their wedding night, she wouldn't say. She sits like a child on the carpet, broken noises scratching at Joe's ears.

Then his alarm goes off in another room, and he can't stay anymore. He hesitates there, heart seizing as he looks at Anne, but he doesn't have any sick days left. He stands up, he gives in, and he leaves for work.



**Madison Sunley**

*If You Look Closely, You Can See Magic in Everything*  
Archival Print



**James Davidson**  
*Down the Rabbit Hole Prologue 1 (top)*  
*Down the Rabbit Hole Prologue 2 (bottom)*  
 Illustration



**Abby Caines**  
*June*  
Oil Painting

**Corey Mattingly**  
*Under the Lamb's Wool*  
First Place Fiction Award

Usually the farm stayed green in the winter but the pines had a beetle in them. They were lanky skeletons among the sleeping oaks and dogwoods and other deciduous trees. The snow was old brown snow with a crust of ice on top and it showed weeks-old patterns snaking up and down the hills around the log house. These were his paths around the property as he doctored the trees with pesticide meant to kill the beetles. He had saved a few.

He put the plate yellow with egg yolk in the sink and rinsed it briefly. He downed the last dregs of his cold coffee, because he did not like to waste things, grimacing at the taste and the flare of heat in his chest. Outside, his hip throbbed as he went down the stairs and he kneaded it with his knuckles. A week ago, he had slipped on the same steps and the ice had now seeped into his bones and it ailed him.

He hobbled around the property as best he could, checking on the trees. You couldn't even see the damned beetles. If you could've seen them that would have been better. They were boring beetles and the holes in the trees leaked a sticky black substance like congealed blood. The leg grew stiffer every day and it seemed like it would continue to worsen before it got better. He did not stay out in the cold for long before returning to the house. Once inside he stood with his bruised hip toward the open-faced gas stove and kneaded his leg like warm bread dough. A small groan came from him.

It occurred to him to stick his leg in the fire and see if that offered any relief.

He made a drink and took two Tylenol so he could sleep, or at least doze, when he laid down to rest. He could not lay on either side comfortably so he spent his time on his back.

When he woke, he thought he was still dreaming because through the shades, light came in soft-filtered bars and he spent some time watching the dust float through the air and enjoyed it because his leg had forgotten to start hurting again now that he was awake. Was he awake? The light was bright and white, the kind that comes at midday in the summer months, but only for a brief time in the early mornings

after the fall back. He could not have slept through the night—why, he had woken at 6 and laid down for his nap at only 12.

He rolled, tentative of the leg, and pulled the cord on the bedside lamp. It did not light. He pulled again and held it tense. The leg flared up and he let go.

It did not light.

He rose from the bed and moved to the window. The light blinded him briefly and when his vision came back, he found it hard to know what he was looking at because there was nothing to look at. The land was all uniform and white like a nurse's dress. His watch said it was 2 o'clock, but it seemed early because the sun had come back after the new snow and caused it to glow and turn your vision colors, blues and greens and purples, when you closed your eyes.

Its depth was not at first noticeable until his eyes fell on the Ford truck in the drive—the snow had fallen to above the pick-up's tires. Then he noticed his breath on the air and a chill swept through him. The power was off. God, how long had it been off? He hurried to the stairs as fast as his leg would allow. A line down somewhere, smothered by the snow? God, it was frigid, how long?

He had avoided the basement since he had fallen, but there was no choice now. The breaker box was above the last step. The leg and the old steps creaked and groaned in call and response and the pain was tremendous. He was beginning to think it may be worse off than he had originally believed.

The sweat was like ice on him when he reached the bottom and the box.

He flipped the main switch three times. It did not work. He cursed. He kept a flashlight on the wall next to the box and flashed it into the basement, among the glass enclosures. The animals lay curled in their homes, black coils completely still, retaining what heat they had left.

How long?

...

He spit the gasoline spray into the snow and shoved the siphon into the jug. It did not sit on the ground but was cradled by the snow.





**Nicole Sylvan**  
*Growth*  
Glass and Ceramic Sculpture



Big handfuls shoveled into his mouth soothed the burn but did little for the taste. He leaned against the truck to rest his leg momentarily. Those stairs worried him—he wished now he had not pushed himself so hard walking to doctor the trees. The snow was falling again and it was dark. It fell and fell and fell so it did not fall at all but was a white sheet draped over the earth.

No sections of green in the hills broke the monotony of the white.

He kinked the siphon hose and carried the red five-gallon jug to the generator. The snow was like putting your face too near a white sheet, damp and cold, billowing on a clothesline just before a storm—it whipped and snapped at you and was Everything.

The generator held five gallons exactly. It was very cold and he had to choke it for some time but it finally started and he hurried back inside.

As fast as the damned leg would allow—he imagined the ball of his femur grinding bone-to-bone along the curve of the pelvis.

...

After returning upstairs from the basement he downed the last four Tylenol in the bottle. He rooted around in the kitchen drawer reserved for such pills but found no more, so limped over to the liquor cabinet.

With the return of light and heat to the house so did it return to the animals. He had studiously checked on each one, staring at them intently until they moved enough to convince him that they had not been permanently damaged. He thought the brood of young copperheads he had recently separated from the mother snake may have been killed—they lied in a mass, looking dead and cold as day-old spaghetti. But, finally, one of the noodles began to slither hither and thither and the others followed.

He had pecked at the little glass case as they revived, cooing as if the little beasts were bunny rabbits. They ignored him or looked only sideways at him, but he did not mind.

The liquor cabinet had been in the family for some time. His mother had used it for china and when she had died he received the cabinet and his wife had used it for some of his mother's china and her own china—there was quite a lot of china in it by that point. When his

daughter came for her visits she always talked about the cabinet and when she wasn't talking about it she was glancing at it forlornly. He made a point not to notice. It was a handsome piece of oak furniture which stood on four humbly adorned legs. The face of its doors was braided metal with just the right amount of wear to be tasteful—a brassy-gold metal shown through where the silver flaked. He pulled the doors open and stepped forward. They offered one a sense of security, standing tall and still like that on both sides, like horse-blinders, almost embracing you. It really was a fine piece of furniture.

The snakes had become an obsession of his since his “permanent leave of absence” from the college. Their venom now netted him more monthly income than his retirement—snake bites were a common occurrence due to hiking tourists. This offered him some reprieve when he thought of that dean sitting at his desk and saying, “Maybe we should consider retirement.” Yes, there had been a lot of “we’s” in that conversation. The venom welled up in him to think of it. He poured a tumbler deep with bourbon and took a healthy swallow.

Now he examined the bottles, taking a detailed inventory of the cabinet's contents. One bottle spiced rum, fifth, full; one and a half bottle Tanqueray dry gin, both fifths; wax-in-tact Maker's Mark, fifth; mason jar of shine, approximately three shots; assorted pints of whiskey-bourbon, none full but one empty; and one bottle of cheap red wine, dusty.

It was only mid-December, but when the snow began to fall in blankets one must expect the worst. It was still falling such. Usually the great snows came in late January and continued into March, so here almost always it entered as a lion and left a lamb. But now maybe they were already here and he was scant prepared. But probably the weather would break and a lucky forty-degree day would take enough of the snow that he could get off the mountain. He took a drink. It warmed him and soothed the leg.

For dinner he ate corned beef and bread. He had considered eggs as an addition but the doctor continued to scold him for his cholesterol—the visits appeased his daughter and he consented only because if he didn't she deemed herself his personal caretaker. After eating, he was quite drunk on the Kentucky bourbon and didn't mind so much to go outside and refill the generator for the night. He hardly

felt the cold or his leg, but once he clumsily let the siphon hose slip from the gas jug and wasted a fair amount on the snow.

He grumbled damnations of the Father and kinked the hose.

...

The snow showed no signs of stopping until the third day. Briefly that pale wafer that looks so formidable in the summer you must avert your eyes and never look directly at it made an appearance. Now he stared directly at it in defiance. Willing it to stay. To warm. But it was not to be. Another cloud front rose from somewhere deep in the trees surrounding the house and it began to spit flurries promptly.

The electric company would not work if this weather continued.

His butt was sore now along with his leg. This was because he had devised a rather silly method of getting down the stairs. Caring for the snakes required too many trips for the leg to stand, so he would sit and scoot on his butt down the steps as a child would. Each rough-hewn wooden step slammed his bony rear and some gave splinters. This was harder on the way back up, but his arms were rather strong still for his age. He used them to ascend backwards, pulling himself onto each step one by one.

Today was the timber rattlesnake's day to be fed. Stretched out she was a massive specimen and the gem of his collection. Had one saw her at her full length in the woods they may have supposed her a log good for sitting and plopped down—only to find themselves in a very dire situation moments later. Her tail was jet black for about six inches until it faded into alternating bars of brown and black. The black sections were well-formed and sharp. They resembled the pattern on Charlie Brown's shirt.

And O! the venom she poured out! Vials and vials of the stuff.

He limped to the cage where the mice were kept under a heat lamp. Sitting his glass down, he selected the plumpest for the girl. She was a big eater. Over to her corner of the room he carried the mouse by its tail, only to get there and realize he had left his glass on top of the mouse cage. He hunted for something to trap the mouse in momentarily. An old metal bucket from under the table sufficed. He placed it on the table and dropped the mouse in. It ran about frantically. Any movement in her vicinity caused the huge snake to

coil and rise into striking position. She began to shake her rattle—that sound like the whirl of thousands of cicadas sweating in summer heat.

He told the girl to be patient with him and limped back to his glass.

The front-side of the large glass enclosure had a sliding door, so the right side slid behind the left and allowed for feeding and removal. He set the drink down and using the long gripping tool he left hanging beside the rattler's cage, he hunted for the mouse, eventually grabbing it by the hind legs.

She had held her rattle beside her face, shaking it infrequently, watching. But now the mouse had excited her. She was very clever with her tail, using it, he imagined, much like a fly fisherman does his rig—he had read some article in a magazine that told of the artistry of the fly fisherman that had convinced him of this. She whipped it here and there, alternating her patterns, slowing, quickening. Sometimes she would move and it disappeared under her massive tubular body only to emerge in an entirely different part of the air, throbbing overhead.

He stood to the non-opening side of the case and held the mouse out and in front of him. When he thought her attention was completely on it and not him, he gingerly pulled the sliding door back and cautiously extended the mouse into the case. It flailed wildly now. Her tail matched its feverish pace. The sound was like ritual music to his blood. He thought of strange rites and religious sacrifices.

Then the snake struck and it was over. She took it head first and the mouse kicked for a moment and then was still. He placed the grabber on top of the cage and reached for his drink.

It happened so fast that he had no time to react. It was only luck that saved him from folly. The snake struck forward again as his fingers wrapped around his glass. He felt the blunt impact against the back of his palm. Without thinking he yanked his hand away, sending the glass to shatter on the floor. In that moment of slow time he wondered why he had not yet felt the burn in his hand. The snake pulled itself back through the opening and into the cage after striking and when its head cleared the glass he lurched forward, slamming against the table and the case for support as he knew his leg would not hold, and shoved the glass closed.



**Fayth Hall**  
*Flowers Grow Out of My Grave*  
Earthenware

His hand was unharmed. The snake was still busy with the mouse. Its plump back half still protruded from her mouth and had saved him from her fangs. It was lucky, too, because she was full of venom. He had milked none of them lately, not wanting to increase their stress levels any more than absolutely necessary.

“Naughty girl,” he said, a touch of a bewildered smile on his face. His voice was shaky and seemed not his own.

Suddenly, his heart seemed to mutiny and try to remove itself from his chest. The hand that the snake had struck raised to his chest and made a claw over his heart, the index and middle fingers sinking into the flesh—to hold it in or rip it out he was unsure. He sunk to the ground among the shattered glass and propped himself against the leg of the table. Within a minute the pain had subsided, but the episode imprinted itself on his mind and he spent much time after that obsessively imagining phantom pains in his left arm and pinching himself to the point of bruising to differentiate them from the real thing.

He got back up the stairs on his ass eventually. He would’ve climbed six flights for a drink to steady himself.

...

Gas. The lawnmower had a half tank or so judging by peering in, say around a gallon; the truck’s once full tank was nearing empty, he must save the rest to drive when the snow melted; between two weedeaters, the pushmower, and the leaf blower—a measly quarter gallon at most, and the weedeater gas was mixed with oil so he was weary of using it. That was not much altogether. Not much at all. The tractor in the field had been his saving grace. Usually he drained the gas from it before the cold season, but this year he had neglected the chore—thank God he had. Ten beautiful gallons he had siphoned from it, a gallon of which was in a large flower waterer because he had run out of jugs.

His rough calculations allowed him three more days at most—and only this long because now he was only pumping power to the lights, the smaller auxiliary heater, and the enclosure’s heating units in the basement. The rest of the house was only just warmer than the outside. He did not worry about someone coming for him, not yet—this possibility did not appeal to him because he would not have left

the snakes anyway. But he prayed and prayed that the damned electric company would get off its ass and get the power back.

In one corner of the basement he had made a kind of nest on the cold concrete floor. All he could manage were blankets and a few pillows. His hands were raw from the steps. Empty bottles and food cans were strewn around the corner and sometimes in the fitful bouts of sleep he was able to manage he would kick them, sending them careening across the floor.

His dreams came to him in disjointed and dark vignettes that rose from a dark tree line and glided ominously toward him. They told him things he could not remember, leaving him with the vague idea that they had been speaking in tongues. He saw great networks of black tendrils, crossing and wrapping around one another. Sometimes they made him think of piles of bodies—all arms and legs splayed at funny angles. Other times he would seem to be slowly retreating from the nexus of tendrils and eventually see, from his new perspective, that he was looking at a black and diseased forest—and sometimes he would become terrified and will himself to retreat even further and find that what he thought had been an entire forest was merely one diseased tree in a jungle of black.

...

Though his deterioration was becoming more pronounced, he had managed to keep tally of the days. He went to bed on Christmas Eve gin drunk, wrapping himself in the blanket nest and cradling the green bottle. He was not yet completely hopeless—his daughter and her family were due on Christmas day. Leave it to Angela to find a way through the snow and up the mountain. She would have trekked through innumerable frozen or burning hells to torment him with all her well-meaning tripe.

He need only last it out until then. He had four gallons remaining—it would come down to the wire. When Angela arrived, he could siphon more gas from that SUV of Ben's and then get down the mountain somehow. Thoughts of his own preservation never crossed his mind, for his mind was as clear as the blizzard which raged outside—blowing its last breath, as it turned out.

But he had no way of knowing this.

...

It was early Christmas morning—hours from light—and he could hear the generator on the other side of the house, sputtering and beating funnily, as if it had developed a heart palpitation. He knew he was working against the clock. If it went out it would take some time to start, and the temperature in the basement—already below what it should have been normally—would drop rapidly.

He let the last reachable drops of the gas in the truck drip into the jug. It was bone dry now. His leg was now effectively a dead appendage, and it dragged behind him like a broken rudder. He put the last of the gas in the generator. He prayed it would make it through the night and retreated to the basement where he watched his snakes and nursed the bottle of spiced rum—it was all that was left and made him warm all over.

Unbeknownst to him in the basement, the sun broke through the clouds at 10 that morning. Christmas day turned into one of those anomalous winter days that imitate early spring too soon, and it melted the worst of the snow from the roads.

...

The extremely punctual children would already be waking their parents now. In the silence he could hear the generator dying. Then the lights began to flicker. The generator would cough and choke and the lights would dim—then return as it began to pump properly again. This happened three times and each time he held his breath until it returned. The third time he rose from his nest and made the preparations to do what he had come to the conclusion must be done. Despite the circumstances, the rum had deluded him into relatively good cheer.

It made him sad to see how little of that was left too, though.

The tank was big enough for a man. At one point it had housed a beautiful albino python, which he had sold. Having, with considerable effort, pushed the glass tank into the center of the room, he leaned against it, bracing his bad leg to it so it might hold his weight as he swung the other over. He nearly fell but managed to keep his balance. He heaved the useless leg over with his hands and then laid down in the tank, curling into the fetal position.



So it was big enough.

He hoped Angela and the kids would have an early Christmas and come directly here.

The generator died an hour later and in the candle light, which was all that remained, he sipped the last of the rum and watched the timber rattler with his face propped up in one hand. She was unmoving. The cold had frozen her. "Sorry, girl," he apologized. Just a little while longer, he thought.

She must be completely docile—but not dead.

...

Ben's mother's idea of Christmas dinner always bothered Angela. In what world was oyster casserole a mainstay of Christmas dishes? Yet she made the slimy dish every year. She and Ben were putting on their coats at the door. Kevin had one arm in his own coat and was looking up at her in disbelief.

"We won't be gone for long," she assured him. "Just stay here with Granny and Grandpa."

"Why do you all get to have Christmas with Papaw and we don't?" Ben demanded.

"We aren't having Christmas with Papaw, Kev—I've told you this."

"Why?"

"Because Papaw is a drunk, Kevin," Bailey said without looking up from her phone. She was sitting in the furthest seat on the sectional from her grandpa. He had fallen asleep watching TV, his shirt pulled up above his pot-belly to allow it some freedom. Angela thought of those slimy oysters floating around in there.

"Bailey!" Angela said, and then looked through the kitchen bar window to see if Marsha was listening. She saw the dyed red hair disappear out of view. Of course she was.

"Ben, help?!"

"Hmm? Oh, yeah. Guys, be good for your grandparents, we'll be back. End of discussion."

Angela sighed. "Thanks a lot, Ben."

"You're welcome," he replied. It was his habit to ignore all forms of sarcasm.

"But why are you going to Papaw's if you aren't going to have Christmas?"

"They're having an intervention," Bailey offered.

"A what?"

"No, we're not!"

Ben made a face, "We're not?"

"Well... I... we'll see you kids later," Angela said, hurrying out the door. "We love you."

"Bring back whatever Papaw got me!" Kevin called after them.

In the car Ben asked if she really thought Christmas day was the best time for an intervention.

"It seems kind of like a cheap shot to me is all."

"It's not an intervention."

"Okay, is it the best day for whatever it is we're doing?"

"Yes. It's Christmas. It's the perfect day."

"Uh huh," he said. Not sarcastic. Just, "Uh huh."

She said it back as sarcastic as she could manage and of course he ignored it.

...

He felt her at his feet first, stirring gently, and his heart jumped. That's it girl. You're a tough gal. That's it. He laid dead still so as only to be a large heating pad. His clothes had been discarded beside the tank, a blanket laid down on the floor of it. His bare back was cold against the glass but it was not yet intolerably so. The candle was still flickering—but it must have been reaching the end of its life and soon he would be plunged into total darkness. Like a sandpaper caress, she slid up his leg. There ya go, girl. Take my heat. It's all for you, all for you... He need only not move. She would not consider him if he did not move. He stifled a burp. Now he felt her probing, testing the air with flicks of her tongue, and then pushing herself into the warm crevices of his body. His entire body tensed suddenly, every muscle going taut. It took all of his will not to move. That's fine, girl. That's



**Megan Woods**

*Chemigram (Weeds)*

Archival Inkjet Print from Unique Silver Gelatin Print

where you wanna be, that's fine. That's fine with me. I'm yours. He dared not sleep. He knew he would kick or punch in his sleep and then it would all be over. Though he had a large dose of anti-venom gripped tightly in his left hand, the chances of his getting down the mountain in time to survive a bite were slim even with it. The hours dragged by, but time had broken down for him. He only laid there and felt her against him.

It was sometime later and in total darkness. It was his right hand first—then his left. And it only spread. At first he could control it, but it grew too strong. His entire body was shaking. His hands were the worst and he clenched them into fists, digging his nails into the palms, but they only shook more violently.

And then that sound like summer heat, a thousand cicadas whirring madly in the trees.

It made him warm all over.

One may survive a single bite from a rattlesnake for a few days before the body's organs completely fail—but with no other options the snake will bite again and again until the threat is still.

...

Angela could see her breath inside the house. It was beginning to get very cold out again. She pulled her coat tighter around her and rubbed her arms quickly. The china cabinet was open and empty. He must be on quite a bender, she thought. Just like dad, don't take anything but the booze.

"I'm sure he's fine, probably staying with a... friend, or..."

"Just get the heat on please."

Ben nodded and went down the stairs. She hated going down there.

It really was a fine piece of furniture. She imagined how all of her china would look inside of it. She imagined that the top level would be her grandmother's pieces, the second shelf, her mothers, and the bottom would hold her own burgeoning collection. Now, wouldn't that be nice? Much better than a whole lot of alcohol.

She always felt very good standing in front of that cabinet, its doors like gentle arms on either side of her.

Suddenly the lights came on and she closed the doors gently.

"You did it!" she called to Ben, but no answer returned. He did not emerge from the basement, so she went to the top of the steps.

"Ben?"

"Don't come down here!"

His voice scared her. "Why? Ben?" She started down the steps.

"Don't!" he said, and she stopped cold.

"What is it?!"

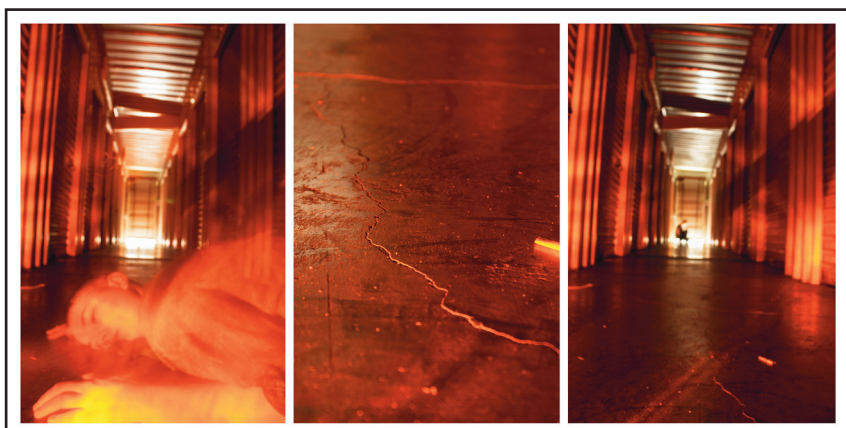
"I don't know what I'm looking at!"

His voice cracked. He sounded like he may start crying.

"It's...I don't know...he's...he's dead, Angie. He's dead, but...oh, God...his stomach...there's something in him! Moving!"

Then there was the sound of Ben being sick and she slowly slid down the wall and sat on the top step. She did not understand. Inside him? She understood—her father was dead. He continued to be sick. She should go check on him. She should see her dead father, too. That was something one ought to do. But she could not move. And, finally, all these thoughts which were too much for her were pushed to the back of her mind by one other—an image of all those slimy grey oysters that Ben had stuffed himself with now splattered on the floor.

He appeared at the bottom of the steps a few minutes later, white as snow and wiping his mouth with his sleeve.



**Makayla Holder**

Binary Extreme, Fire, and Unknown  
Digital Photographs



**Sam Neal**  
*Do You See It Too?*  
Oil Painting



## Elizabeth Von Mann

### *Welcome Wagon*

The morning that they arrived had started cloudy, carrying the type of mugginess with it that clogged every pore. Even the tree branches were hanging lower than normal under the damp sky. It was a week before Halloween. The weather was still warmer than it should have been that late in the year, but there was never any sense in trying to predict the weather in Kentucky. As I watched the moving van roll to a stop in front of the old ranch style house through our kitchen window, I spoke aloud to my family.

“I give it an hour before the rain gets them.”

My little brother, Daniel, snorted into his cereal. “I give it thirty minutes.”

Dad slurped his coffee. “We’ll see.”

Mom said nothing as she continued to look out the window, the newspaper she read religiously every day forgotten in front of her on the kitchen counter, having less to offer than the new entertainment next door. I watched as her brows pulled together when only two young women emerged from the moving van. A few seconds passed as I waited for my mother to say something – she was not the type of lady to let her thoughts go unspoken – and I frowned when she only went back to reading the paper without saying a word. Confused, I let my own eyes drift back out the window to the women.

We hadn’t had anything of worth to spy on since old Mrs. Eldridge passed away in her sleep five months prior (“At her daughter’s house while visiting, thank the lord, my nerves wouldn’t have been able to handle a haunting right next door,” Mom had told our cousin Nancy over the phone). My whole family had spent our morning pretending not to watch as our new neighbors slowly began transferring furniture and boxes into the house.

My Cheerios had long been eaten, with the bowl washed and put away in the dishwasher by the time the first few raindrops began to fall about thirty minutes later. Daniel smirked at me triumphantly and I responded by thwapping him over the head with the sink wash rag as I passed by.



Dad tapped his mug against the tabletop, then gulped the last of his coffee before standing up decisively. "Alright," he said. "Let's get to it."

Daniel and I both groaned out loud. We knew there was no arguing with our father when he said that. He would always just say "If I can still do work at my age, then so can you kids. When people need help, you help them." By the time we were strong enough to carry and lift, Dad had volunteered us for free labor. Whether it was yard work for our own home or assisting with school or town functions, our family was always there. Dad said that helping people in the community was the right thing to do and Mom said it "built character." Easy for her to say when her schedule as a nurse made her busy all the time. Plus, it was Sunday, her one day a week where she was never on-call, and no one ever asked Mom to do anything on Sundays. So, I knew Dad was only expecting Daniel and I to get our hind ends up. My plans for a nice relaxing Sunday sagged like the leaves under the rain. As a teenage girl, if someone so much as looked at me, I wanted to crawl into a hole and not emerge for days, so the idea of being around complete strangers for hours made me want to die. Of course, my dad would suddenly decide it was our sworn duty as neighbors to help some of the only people I didn't know in our town.

So, by the time I had grudgingly donned my rain boots and jacket to protect myself against the heavy rain that had steadily started to dump itself from the sky and met my father and brother outside on the front porch, my angst was already reaching Danger Zone levels. Because I was fourteen and obnoxious, I made sure to stomp my feet loudly, emanating as much grumpy energy as possible as I walked up beside them, my hands shoved deep into my raincoat pockets. However, since Dad was "immune to the boo boo face," he merely whistled "Ring of Fire" by Johnny Cash as he led us to our new neighbors.

Although both houses were ranch-style and had been built around the same time, I had always thought the house next door was much nicer than ours. Done in brick instead of our house's wood board, with two stories compared to our measly one, it had a wraparound porch that I had loved to use as a hiding spot when Daniel and I played Hide and Seek as kids. It had somewhat fallen into disrepair in the few months it had been on the market and a small part of me had



**Abbey Williams**  
*Overtured*  
Silver Gelatin Print

felt superior that at least our house looked better at that point. As we got closer to the home and I saw the two young women struggling to carry a wrapped-up, slick with rain, couch onto the front porch of the dilapidated house, their clothing already soaked through, I found I had a hard time meeting their eyes as we came to a stop a few paces away from the women and they paused what they were doing to look at us.

“Howdy!” Dad addressed a woman no older than thirty with short, dark brown hair that in better weather probably looked stylish but, in the downpour, just looked a mess. Dad rushed over to help them carefully set the piece of furniture down on the ground. The two women ushered us up the steps to stand under the porch so we wouldn’t be a bunch of imbeciles talking to each other in a rainstorm. My father smiled at them when we had all taken off our jacket hoods. “We’re your new neighbors. We thought we’d come by and see if y’all needed any help. My name is Tim, and these are my kids, Daniel and Josie.”

“Oh! Yes, that would be great, actually. Thank you. My name is Lindsay, and this is Jane,” said the woman, gesturing to her friend, a petite lady with a blonde bob, a friendly smile, and very white teeth. Lindsay put out her hand to shake with my father. Dad did so, then turned to shake with Jane, hand outstretched in expectation. Jane reached out and pumped Dad’s hand in one firm shake, flattening her mouth into what I always saw people from cities pass off as a polite smile.

“Of course,” Dad said. “We’re happy to help.”

As Lindsay piped up and began telling us what they needed the most help with, I let myself size the two women up out of the corner of my eye. Though I hadn’t been thinking much of it before that point, I began to wonder about the relationship between them. My first thought had been that perhaps they were sisters who were moving closer to home. It was clear to me that they were from the city. However, there was a sticky feeling in the back of my mind that whispered doubt. After all, Jane and Lindsay did not look anything alike. Or maybe there were other people who were going to be living here too and they just hadn’t shown up yet. I thought of the way my mother had looked at them this morning, almost like she smelled

something suspicious or unpleasant, and I couldn't understand why. Jane and Lindsay seemed perfectly nice to me.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Daniel trying to get my attention. I glanced up at him as the two of us wordlessly picked up either side of a coffee table and could read the giant question mark on his face. I shrugged as much as I could while carrying a heavy piece of furniture. Daniel screwed his face up all goofy, making an exaggerated thinking face. I snorted and took the opportunity to use my side of the table to shove the other end into his stomach, making him grunt in pain and begin moving towards the door. It made me glad that I wasn't the only one feeling nosy about are new neighbors, but if my mother was there and had seen our exchange, I knew she would be swatting us on the back of the head. It never mattered how much she gossiped or questioned things people in the town did - we were never allowed to because we needed to "stop being rude and mind your own business, now."

For a while, I didn't have the chance to think any more about my new neighbors as Dad made sure we stayed in constant motion. Despite being able to get through the small number of belongings packed into the moving truck quickly between the five of us, I became progressively more soaked and colder, even with my protective rain gear. I became marginally less bitter when I started to realize that Jane and Lindsay were genuinely likable. After that initial meeting, Jane had relaxed considerably. They had started to ask Daniel and me questions about school and things to do for fun in town. Anytime I was able to lift something on my own, they'd cheer me on, saying things like "You go, girl, show the men up!" Daniel would roll his eyes and Dad just smiled, politely confused, but I loved it.

Despite being busy and tired, I couldn't help but notice how close both women seemed. Whenever they'd pass by one another going in and out of the house, they'd playfully bump shoulders or squeeze each other's arms in support. There were several moments when one would sling her arm around the other's shoulders, or they would simply lean against one another in exhaustion. When I would see it, I would often find myself continually glancing at the two women. Though I knew some families in the area who didn't mind being physically affectionate, that had never been the dynamic in my own. Not even among my own friends did I touch them casually or for too long. It

was not because I felt uncomfortable with the idea of physical contact. There would be days when I would be so touch starved that I could feel my skin ache. So few people in my life were openly physically affectionate that any excessive contact seemed inappropriate, or even taboo. The only open affection I'd ever seen between two people were married couples – to see these two women display actions I'd only been taught to associate with marriage fascinated me.

But when I look back, it was that day when the smallest seed of a thought was planted in the very back of my mind.

After about two hours of work and heavy lifting, I grunted as I finally set down my last box for the day. I leaned back on the kitchen counter, trying to look chill and not like a little kid in front of my new neighbors. I glanced around and realized that even though we had been loading things into the house for hours, there wasn't actually that much stuff. Daniel and Dad were still getting the last of their belongings, leaving Jane and Lindsay to begin sorting through what was in all the boxes. Jane hummed while she cleaned off the not-so-thin layer of dust that had accumulated on every surface in the house. Lindsay was smiling as she listened to Jane and placed cups away in the cabinet. There was something so sweet and poignant about the moment that I felt my throat tightening with a sudden desire to experience the same peace and happiness these women seemed to possess. Over the last hour or so, I'd decided that I was genuinely excited about having Jane and Lindsay as my new neighbors. I found myself daydreaming about becoming friends with these cool people who seemed to have experienced so much more of the world than me. I hoped it would come true and since we were finally alone and I didn't have to worry about being polite in front of Dad, I decided to pry a little.

"Looks like y'all are gonna get to go shopping for more stuff. Not much here, really," I said.

Lindsay nodded with a wry grin. "Yeah, we've only lived in apartments before this. Funny, we felt like we were busting in our old Louisville place."

"Oh, so you guys are from Louisville?"

"Yeah, but we're familiar with the area here. I'm from Harlan, but Jane grew up here."



**Paige Hale**  
*Honey Bunney*  
Ceramic Sculpture



Before I could respond, Dad and Daniel were stomping back in. “What’s that now? You’re from around these parts, Jane?” Dad said, settling down his final box and wiping his wet hands on his completely soaked pants. By that point, we all looked like drowned cats. “Who’s your family? I may be familiar with ‘em.”

It was only then that I realized Jane had stopped humming and was standing still by the window which looked out into the backyard and the woods beyond. She was turned away from the others, so only I saw when something like dread crossed her face.

“Yes, as a matter of fact. Do you happen to know Jenny Bryant?”

Suddenly, the atmosphere in the kitchen changed drastically. My father’s posture, usually always slouched and relaxed, grew tense, his shoulders coming to their full height. His eyes hardened into a glare and I blinked in shock at his behavior. “You’re Jane Bryant?” he asked quietly.

In the silence that followed his question, Jane had turned to face my father, her stance wide like she expected a fight. All traces of the dread I had seen a moment ago were gone, replaced with an odd intensity. Lindsay seemed to have caught up to what was going on unsaid in the room because she had stopped unpacking to move closer to Jane. Daniel and I, however, were lost.

Daniel glanced around at the adults. “Jenny Bryant? I only knew about her son, Devon.” He laughed. I’m pretty sure I was the only one who caught the nervous edge to it. “No one ever told me about there being two other daughters, too.”

Staring straight at my father, Jane entwined her hand with Lindsay’s and the other woman clutched protectively at Jane’s arm. Daniel and I stared at their hands, dumbfounded. My brain had barely even begun to process what was going on in front of me when a small sliver of sunlight slipped through the clouds and came through the kitchen window to brightly silhouette the two women. Blinking hard against the sunspots in my eyesight, I looked away from the women before me, feeling unsteady.

“We aren’t sisters,” Jane said.

I could not stop myself from staring blatantly at the women in front of me. Slowly, I realized my hands were shaking against the

countertop. I clenched them until I could feel my nails pressing painfully into my palms and crossed my arms tightly against my chest. I had never seen my father act so hateful and a small, frantic part of my mind knew there was no way these two kind women deserved it. I thought of the way I had identified with Jane and Lindsay, how I had wanted to so desperately to be their friend not minutes ago; my mind reeled at the image of my father turning to place that horrible hate on me. My stomach felt like it had dropped out of its lining and I felt like if someone didn't do something soon, I would burst. Finally, I heard my father speak, still staring at Jane and Lindsay. "That's what I thought," he said and turned away from them. "Kids, c'mon. I think it's time for us to go."

"O-okay," we murmured, shocked and uncomfortable by the scene we had just witnessed. Daniel swiftly followed behind my father, obviously eager to leave. I moved to do the same and had made it all the way to the front doorway before my body froze. Slowly, I looked back. From the doorway, I could still see directly into the kitchen where Jane and Lindsay stood together. The rain had finally stopped, and the sun had spread further into the room through the window. But despite being surrounded by light after a long day of raining and work, the two women were clutching each other tightly, and crying.



# NON FICTION

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**Daniel Mutter**

*Old Friends*

First Place Creative Non-Fiction Award

It was the summer before my senior year at South Oldham High School when Nathan left me. Just like that, I was on my own at school, eight hours a day, five days a week. Looking back on it, I remember the pain of losing my childhood friend, somebody to rely on day in and out with everything, no holds barred. We try to remember the good things about these times, but it's not always that easy.

For the entirety of my life, I've only ever lived in one house and one home. I say this because when I was less than a year old, we moved from a house I can't even remember outside of dusty black-and-white polaroids, to the home in which I can connect to nearly every big event in my life. The old house was where my family first met Nathan's. A month after we moved, Nathan's dad found a place in the same neighborhood, a mere minute down the street via bicycle. From then on, the next 18 years of my life became a revolving door of friendships, some leaving for good and others circling back around. However, there was always one constant throughout it all.

Perhaps the best way I can encapsulate our friendship in a narrative is by sharing the story of our first real adventure. We were, after all, boys growing up in a world with land lines and family-shared computers. While some of our friends enjoyed shooting zombies and jacking cars, our adventures took place far from flat-screens and the Internet. Both of our fathers subscribed to the "go out and get some dirt on your hands" mentality, and so we took to the outdoors.

I grew up in modern-day suburbia, but my neighborhood teetered right on the edge of a sprawling wood. For two teenage boys, that forest held an entire world simply begging to be explored. And so it



**Mardy Wells**  
*No Image*  
Oil on Masonite

was that on a scorching afternoon in the summer of my eleventh year, Nathan and I devised a plan.

See, Nathan's backyard ran right up to the edge of the forest. My parents went to work during the day and his dad took calls in their home office all day long, so we were free birds. All we had to do was scale the chain-link fence and find ourselves on the precipice of exploration. This was where we'd begin our investigation of the unknown.

Tucked away in the basement under a fitted sheet with a flashlight as our only attendant, we came up with this entire narrative which would be our guide. Pirate stories weren't cool enough, ninjas were entirely overdone, but our childhood idol gave us the right idea. And so it came to be that we strapped on our cargo shorts and green button-ups, perfected our Australian accents, and took to the wild as two miniature Steve Irwins. On the prowl for adventure.

We jumped that fence with vigor. Quickly the sunlight began to fade as overhead trees covered our scampering bodies. Instantly our feet took to the new avenues which opened before us. We acted as though a camera crew were following us around, pointing out certain things which stood out to us.

At one point, we came across four rabbits sitting still as can be. In hushed voices, we described the scene before us and treated it like it was our cinematic masterpiece. Suddenly, I exploded from our bushy hiding spot like the bullet of a gun and chased down the nearest rabbit. Nathan quickly followed suit as we sprinted after these extremely agile creatures. Of course, we didn't come close to catching anything, but it didn't matter that day.

I've no idea how far we traveled, but to us it felt like a hundred miles. We came across so many landmarks which would become the subject of our future travels. At one point, a humongous drain pipe opened up ominously. One day we would venture into that tunnel, but that was too advanced for first-time adventurers. At the end of our path was a beautiful field full of flowers of any shape and hue. Daisies, lilacs, daffodils, petunias, tulips, roses, sunflowers, the whole like. We carelessly picked a bouquet to take home with us, not even bothering to think that perhaps they belonged to somebody, that this was a garden. Childhood innocence.



**Brenna Molden**  
*Death Tree*  
Sculpture Installation

As the afternoon winded down, dinnertime was our ultimate deadline. No excuses would suffice in telling our parents why we might skip dinner. And yet, we couldn't help but find a cool stone to lay on and appreciate the comfort which comes from knowing you've had one of the best days ever. The air began to cool and needlepoint goosebumps scaled our arms and legs. Somewhere a bird squawked out a high-pitched melody of sorts. When it became eerily quiet, the trickle of muddy creek water could be heard.

Suddenly we were vividly aware of the life sprawling out all around us. Crawfish scuttling about, lizards crawling and hunting for their own dinner, even the fireflies began to creep out and create a beautiful light with which to illuminate the night. We bathed in the noise of the forest and soaked up every ounce of sensation.

All good things must eventually come to an end however, and we made our way back to home base. Goodbyes were said as we hugged and parted ways. When my parents asked how my day was, I couldn't even begin to put it into words. How can you put the most perfect day into words?

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I still remember the day I first heard the bad news. Growing up, Nathan's mother was one subject we never discussed. She was a bit of an enigma, for all I knew about her was that she stayed in bed most of the time, and we were not to disturb her while she watched her soap operas. As a child, I'm sure I just brushed this off as his mother being sick or having something wrong, but it was none of my business so it never came up. Nathan's father came to the door when I knocked one day, something that only happened on very rare occasions.

"Hey son, Nathan isn't free to talk right now." This struck me as odd, as I knew we had made plans to hang out that afternoon. Even though we were in high school now, we refused to be those kids who were too cool to hang out with our childhood friends. We were a package deal, always.

"Oh, okay. Is everything okay?" I asked.

"Yeah, it's no big deal, he just has a lot of homework." I knew this wasn't true, Nathan would simply have told me this himself. Still, his dad was a kind, yet strict individual, so his word was final.





**Garrison McMillian**  
*Wasting Mothers*  
Archival Inkjet Print

“Alright, just tell him to text me if he’s able to hang out later.”

“Will do. Tell your mom and dad I say hi for me.” And that was that.

I never saw Nathan again. He never messaged me. A few days later I watched as a moving van and a pickup took most everything. In one afternoon, the most solid part of my life to that point was hauled away. At the time I couldn’t understand what I had missed, and in fact part of me felt as though I were to blame. This was a ridiculous notion, but it filled up the empty spaces in my head nonetheless.

Eventually it was explained to me by my mother that Nathan’s mother suffered heavily from postpartum depression. She told me that when his little sister had been born, his mother’s emotions became too much for her to control. I understand more now that her struggle led her to become an alcoholic, which is why she never left her room. She was simply too drunk to function.

Nathan’s mom ran away from home. She left her husband and three children to go live with her parents in Montana, but his father being the stubborn man he was, refused to let her go. So he packed up everything and traveled west.

From then on, Nathan became a common subject in my writing. Perhaps a part of me thought one day we’d reunite, and I could show him that even though he’d moved away, he had left behind fragments of himself spread all across my personal literary canon. As an early writer, my characters simply mimicked the adventures I’d carried out in the real world. This way I filled the weirdly empty spot that had been left behind. Not long after they left, I messaged Nathan on Facebook. I just wanted to know how he was.

“I hope you’re doing okay. Miss ya. Hope we can keep in touch still.”

He immediately opened the message and read it, which I know because of the notification I received. However, he never responded, and I figured that was what he wanted. After all the pain he’d dealt with of growing up taking care of his siblings, and the burden of keeping it a secret for years, he probably just wanted to remake himself. At the time, I couldn’t understand why this included cutting me out.

Perhaps I write so much because I hope one day he'll read some of it. Maybe when we're older we will be able to reconnect and make up for time forgotten. This is a desire I hold on to with a special place in my heart.

Now I attend college two hours away from my home, but I still go spend every summer there with my parents, living in the same neighborhood as I have for the last twenty-one years. One scorching day last summer I realized I had nothing to do and nowhere to go. I found a pair of old cargo shorts and put on a green button-up. The forest called me.

I thought I could rekindle my memories of the past, maybe trod the same paths I trailblazed as a kid. When my feet reached the edge of the forest these dreams quickly faded away. Every path was overgrown with new bushes, weeds, and emerald-green vegetation. The light faded from my eyes as I swallowed my pride and headed home, head down. As much as we want to, sometimes we really can't find our old ghosts. Even though it hurts, I truly believe this to be for the best.

Sometimes, I think about reaching out to Nathan again, sending him a short message over social media just to see if he'd respond now. But, I always stop by reminding myself of something important. When he is ready to talk to me again, he will. I could never understand his situation without being in it, but I can try to get there a little more every day. Just the other day, I saw a pack of rabbits waiting about a hundred yards away. With a grin, I pointed to the camera crew and said, "Watch this!"





**Benjamin Doss**  
*Soldier Walking in Rain*  
Digital Painting

# BIO GRAPHIES

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**Elizabeth Antoniou** is a senior at Morehead State University double majoring in elementary education and art. Some of her previous sculpture work has been showcased in the juried *20th Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, and received several awards. Antoniou's current projects include developing film photography techniques through an introductory course and painting crafts for fun.

**Emily Arledge** is a sophomore majoring in art and minoring in photography at Morehead State University. Arledge's current projects include digital photography and learning other common art media.

**Brandon Banta** is a senior art major at Morehead State University with a minor in visual communications. As an openly queer person, his current work focuses on some of the darker stories that queer people can experience.

**Caitlyn Biggs** is a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art at Morehead State University. Biggs likes to make art that tells her story through her surroundings. She recently presented work in the 2019 Artist's Corner at the Highlands Museum in Ashland, Kentucky.

**Taylor Burnette** is a sophomore Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art candidate at Morehead State University. Much of her work is mixed media and focused on different ideas and ways to experiment with media. Burnette displayed work in the 2019 *Spring Showcase* at the Rowan County Art Center in Morehead, Kentucky, and her work was published in the 2019 issue of *Inscape*.

**Abby Caines** is an art major at Morehead State University, in her third year, pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art. Caines' work is focused on family, identity and purpose. She won First Place in MSU's Department of Art & Design costume contest in 2017, was published in the 2017 edition of *Inscape*, and was juried into both the 2018 and 2019 *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, winning First Place in painting in 2018.

**Emily Crabtree** is an undergraduate student from Monticello, Kentucky. She is an English major with a minor in creative writing at Morehead State University. Crabtree is currently working on her poetry and gaining more experience in writing short stories and nonfiction.

**Cody Ryan Daugherty** is a senior at Morehead State University, finishing his Bachelor of Arts in Art degree. His paintings serve as emotional outlets in his life, telling stories of unrequited love, infatuation and heartbreak. Daugherty's work is comprised of portraiture of figmental women. His paintings take on color scheming and attention to details that accentuate his subject matter. Floral themes are featured to further represent Daugherty's internal feelings.

**James Davidson** is an art major in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art program and is currently focusing on an oil painting series that is about his gender identity and mental health.

**Benjamin Doss** was an art major at Morehead State University, graduating in December of 2019. His work, which reflects appreciation for analog technology and conceptual art/design in film, was displayed and won First Place in digital at the Gateway Regional Center's *19th Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, in 2019.

**Paige Hale** is a sophomore art education major at Morehead State University. They were awarded an Honorable Mention in the 2017 *Burley-Coal Annual Juried High School Exhibition*. Their goal is to teach art in an alternative school to disadvantaged youth. Hale's current work is focused on forcing the viewer to take a closer look and to think a little deeper.

**Fayth Hall**, an art major in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Morehead State University, focuses on highly decorative functional ceramics-exploring themes of death and decay alongside the peacefulness of nature. Hall exhibited work in the 2019 *Spring Showcase* at the Rowan County Arts Center in Morehead, Kentucky, and she received First Place in ceramics and sculpture at the *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, in 2019.

**Makayla Holder** has had three photographs published in *Inscape* previously and won a scholarship for her photography. She is inspired by self-portrait photography and the work of most documentary photographers. Holder is currently working on a series that is solely self-portraiture with extreme qualities such as lighting. She hopes to use this body of work to document her journey through mental illness and recovery through images of one's self.

**Harley Johnson** is from Hazard, Kentucky, and is a creative writing major at Morehead State University. They have several projects in the works including two novels and a book of poetry, but they have never been published before.

**Elizabeth Keeton** comes from West Liberty, Kentucky, and is currently studying creative writing at Morehead State University. Keeton has received the Judy Rodgers Award for Poetry. She intends to continue work on her current novel and continue working on her poetry.

**Aleksander Kendrick** is a creative writing major at Morehead State University, attending his second year as of 2020. Having written fiction since he was 10, he has published one novella, “Wilde Ones,” through Upbury Press. His current projects include one NaNoWriMo-winning fantasy project, “Godfrey’s moon,” and several other upcoming stories.

**Liz Ketz** is a sophomore at Morehead State University pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art. Ketz displayed her work at the Gateway Regional Art Center’s *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, in 2018 and 2019, and had work published in the 2019 issue of *Inscape*. Ketz is mostly known for her work incorporating pressed flowers into her paintings.

**Nancy Lewis** is an undergraduate Bachelor of Fine Arts candidate at Morehead State University. Her work focuses on a range of realism with an individual style in portraiture, which speaks about the essence of a person. Lewis participated in MSU’s *In the Making* exhibit in the Golding-Yang Art Gallery, and the *Student Diversity* exhibit in the Adron Doran University Center. In 2019, she was juried into ArtsPlace’s *University Open* in Lexington, Kentucky; displayed work in the Gateway Regional Art Center’s *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, receiving an Honorable Mention Award; and had work published in *Inscape*.

**Dakotah Austin Lizotte** graduated from the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art program at Morehead State University in December 2019. He has participated in various exhibits while attending MSU. His awards include the Best of Show Award as an emerging artist at the Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead, Kentucky, and First Place in graphic design/digital art at the *19th Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* hosted by the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Lizotte was published in the 2019 issue of *Inscape*. He is currently working on kickstarting his own business, which is focused on skateboarding.

**Corey Mattingly** is a student of English at Morehead State University. His work previously appeared under pseudonyms in such publications as *The Aironaut* and *Flash Fiction Online*. He is currently crafting a collection of short stories.

**Amber Meckley**, originally from Abbottstown, Pennsylvania, is currently a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art candidate at Morehead State University. Meckley plans to mainly focus on graphic design but also enjoys drawing and creating sculptural work. In 2019, she had a sculpture piece juried into the *Spring Showcase*, which took place at the Rowan County Art Center in Morehead, Kentucky. Meckley has also done some freelance commissioned drawings and poster designs.

**Garrison McMillian** is a senior biomedical sciences major with a pre-physician assistant track and a photography minor. His photograph, “Muscle Comparison,” was published and awarded Third Place in the 2019 edition of *Inscape*. Also in 2019, three pieces from a separate collection were juried into the *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. His piece “Rising Waters, Four Weeks of Spilled Tears After the 2019 Dayton Ohio Mass Shooting” earned him an Honorable Mention. McMillian enjoys capturing moments in time that balance poignant and paradisiacal forces.

**Brenna Molden** is a freshman at Morehead State University and plans to apply to the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art program. She focuses on realist art and artwork contributing to her own style. Molden received the W. Paul and Lucille Caudill Little Scholarship for Study of the Arts Award. She is currently working on projects that focus on mental illness and how it affects the human body and mind.

**Daniel Mutter** was born and raised in Crestwood, Kentucky. He is an English major with a minor in creative writing at Morehead State University. He attended South Oldham High School, where he helped to pioneer their writing club. Mutter was nominated for the English Undergraduate Student of the Year in 2019 at Morehead State. Currently, he spends his time drawing, and writing short poems and short stories. He hopes to start a career in publishing after graduation.

**Sam Neal** is a junior at Morehead State University working toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art with a minor in art entrepreneurship. She received First Place in art in *Inscape* (2017); First Place in drawing (2018)

and Honorable Mention (2019) in the *Annual Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky; Honorable Mention in the *Spring Showcase* hosted by the Rowan County Art Center in Morehead, Kentucky (2019); Honorable Mention in the statewide-juried *University Open*, hosted by ArtsPlace in Lexington, Kentucky (2019); and was accepted into the inclusive Lexington Art League's *PRHBTN exhibition* in Kentucky (2019). Neal is well-rounded and knowledgeable in 2D, 3D and digital art but specializes in the use of oil paint on a large scale. Her work depicts deeply personal aspects of her life, including complex narratives through self-portraiture.

**Christen Nichelle Reid** is a senior at Morehead State University with dual majors in computer science and art and minoring in visual communications. She is the treasurer of the MSU Graphic Design Club (AIGA). Reid designed *Inscape's* cover around the VISION 2020 theme, representing both the year and human eyesight. Her inspiration came from an eye chart used at optometry offices. She recreated the font type and style of the table.

**Savannah Sprinkle** is majoring in art at Morehead State University. This is the first time one of her works has been published. Sprinkle's illustration was completed for her Digital Foundations class, where she discovered how much she loves color and lines in general.

**Paige Stamper** is a junior enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art program at Morehead State University. Currently, the direction Stamper is taking with her art is experimental as she tries, trying to find styles and media she prefers. Her goal is to produce freelance art, which she can sell and add to her portfolio to gain an apprenticeship in the tattoo industry. In the summer of 2019, Stamper was honored to be selected for LEXArts' state-wide juried *University Open* at ArtPlace in Lexington, Kentucky, and to be a part of the small group of artists participating.

**Madison Sunley** is a senior at Morehead State University majoring in strategic communication and graduating in May 2020. After taking a photography course in the fall of 2019, Sunley wishes she would have taken more art classes. She is working on an experimental project.

**Nicole Sylvan** is a graduate student at Morehead State University focusing on nature-inspired ceramics and mixed-media sculpture. Their current work intends to help strengthen the bond between humans and animals. Sylvan's artwork has been featured in multiple juried exhibitions and galleries, and they were awarded Best Body of Work in Morehead State University's 2019 *Annual BFA Exhibition*.

**Jacob Tackett** is an undergraduate double major studying English and philosophy at Morehead State University. They are originally from Ashland, Kentucky, and enjoy taking hikes through the mountains and meditating. In the future, they plan to continue challenging themselves to grow as a writer.

**Elizabeth Von Mann** is a native of Richmond, Kentucky, who has dreamed of being a writer ever since she realized making up stories was a viable career option. She is a student in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at Morehead State University. Her work has been published in *Inscape* and Z Publishing House's *Kentucky Emerging Writers* series.

**Mardy Wells** is a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art student at Morehead State University. Wells had artwork published in *Inscape* three years in a row, with one of the submissions winning Second Place in the art category. Recently, two of their paintings were accepted into the Gateway Regional Arts Center's *Annual Art & Design Student Exhibition* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, one of which won Second Place in the painting category.

**Abbey Williams** is a senior at Morehead State University and a native of Morehead, Kentucky. She is currently finishing her Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in art and minors in visual communications and art history. Williams strives to become a professional graphic designer. She is certified in Adobe Illustrator and InDesign and is currently studying for her Adobe Photoshop certification.

**Megan Woods** is a senior convergent media major and photography minor at Morehead State University, whose work is generally experimental, focusing on alternative process photography. In 2019, she was awarded Third Place in the state-wide juried *University Open* at the ArtsPlace Gallery in Lexington, Kentucky, Second Place in the *Kentucky Living Magazine Photo Contest for Nature*, and Second Place in photography at the *20th Annual MSU Student Art & Design Exhibition* at the Gateway Regional Arts Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky.



*Inscape* is a Morehead State University publication with a long history of cutting-edge literary and visual arts. Media and genres of work range from prose, poetry, short story, long narrative, non-fiction and creative essays to ceramics, photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, design and digital art.

The Department of English offers MSU students the opportunity to submit work for publication. Students may submit poetry, fiction, non-fiction, translations or drama. The works are peer-reviewed by a panel and top selections are included in *Inscape*.

The Department of Art and Design offers students two opportunities to have their work juried for publication. Jurors review the competitive pool of submissions every issue for both the cover design and the visual artwork published. These selections help produce a unique and diverse issue of *Inscape* each year.

For specific guidelines and submission dates, visit  
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